

# THE ARGOSY.

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## THE MYSTERIOUS SHIP.

A young Napoleon of finance who derives an income from an unknown source—The tilts his wealth precipitates in Wall Street and the marvelous story of how he came by it—Escapes that are miraculous and a happy chance that is literally heaven born.

*(Complete in This Issue.)*

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### CHAPTER I.—A CRASH IN GENERAL ELECTRIC.

THERE was a great commotion on 'Change that day. New York's great colosseum of trade was a pit of scrambling, riotous stock jugglers, resembling savages in the throes of a war dance. It was one of those critical hours when fortunes hang by a hair. Every morning for a week past millionaires had sprung from heaven knows where; and every evening witnessed the pitiable spectacle of old financiers hurled down, with their savings of lifetimes, into the gutters of bankruptcy, like squeezed lemons. It was General Electric that started the stampede.

Though the downfall of this stock meant the sweeping away of his fortune, John Marks was quite the coolest young operator hovering about the edge of the 'broil.' Though with every shrill announcement he saw the mainstays of his fortune severed one by one as with a saber blow, he puffed away at his cigar as nonchalantly as that famous emperor who is said to have fiddled while Rome was going up in smoke.

Scarcely six months before John Marks had dropped into the market from the clear heavens like a lightning bolt of Jove. Whence he came, and whither he was going, had very little interest for the jackals of trade, however. "What has he got?" was the all absorbing query; and when it was discovered that he had an available million, he became an interesting personage.

And now his critical hour had come. If General Electric held out another twenty minutes, Marks would save himself. He made one splendid rally, and it looked like victory and millions for him, and the downfall of hundreds for others. It was a splendid effort; but suddenly there came a terrific onslaught from some unknown source, and the stock broke. Behind this last charge there was at least a five million dollar combination. Who composed it or whence they came nobody seemed to be able to tell; but when

the three o'clock gong sounded, General Electric was counted out, a beaten gladiator.

As the young financier stood on the verge of that maelstrom, watching his fortunes rally and then go down like a vanquished Titan, he never turned a hair. Indeed, there was a smile of mild cynicism upon his lips, though his strong, soldierly countenance was somewhat paled with the struggle. During all the mortal combat he never winced; but when it was over, and he was proclaimed a bankrupt man, he looked down toward the archway through which the traders were pouring in and out like bees. Then he was shocked to spy an elderly man with bulging eyes, cheeks flushed with victory, and with a battered hat on the backmost bump of a flat, bald head.

"What! Major Stansbury here!"

Marks edged forward to a point where he could watch the older man through the opening. He saw the celebrated financier dash into the corridor and shove his arm familiarly through that of a tall, monocled foreigner, whispering something in the latter's ear that made his whole countenance light up with a species of satanic triumph.

Marks pressed forward. His hands were clenched, his whole frame quivering. The pair passed into the neighboring café, while the solitary watcher glowered on them from ambush.

"Millie's father my ruin!" he gasped. "Was he the power behind that last annihilating blow? I can't believe it." And groaning thus in spirit, the man who was a twenty millionaire or a bankrupt that day on the turn of a penny went forth into the world again.

Once on the pavement, the cool air caressing his throbbing temples, Marks began to calm down and "array his thoughts in pensive order." Yes, he was penniless. That was bitter enough; but to be brought to his knees by a dagger thrust delivered by one whom he believed to be his firmest, stanchest friend, that disillusion was too much for a young nature that believed still in the sacredness of friendship, the loyalty of love. It seemed to put a new complexion upon everything—to color with a sinister flame his whole perspective.

Marks was sad, then angry, then revengeful, by turns. Soon, however, there passed before the dreamer's face a sweet, maidenly presence.

"Millie! Poor child! What a blow this will be to her. I must hasten and tell her before the evil tidings reach her through others."

Scarcely half an hour after the gong sounded to the world the dispersion of the John Marks' million, a carriage drove up to one of the mansions on Fifth Avenue. Out bounded an elderly man—the financier who had engineered through "the Street" one of the most successful *grand coups* of the decade.

There was a firm face watching for him at the window. It was that of a woman of perhaps forty five, refined, yet whose native charm was hardened by those lines of ambition and aggressiveness which are seen only upon the countenances of the queens of Mayfair.

"Well?" was all she said; but the breathless syllable conveyed a world of meaning to her husband as he advanced up the marble steps.

"Bankrupt—cleaned out—swept off the earth!" was the brusque reply.

"Poor fellow!" interposed the society goddess in tones which said, "It serves the upstart good and right!" And with a clinging caress of pride and admiration for the man who held the whip hand over the financial world, she followed him over the heavy carpet as if longing to pry into the particulars, like one who lingers over the details of an execution.

"Where's Millie?" said Major Stansbury, pressing forward into the grand *salon*.

"In the tea room, dear." Then in lower tones, "Break it softly to her, Silas, won't you? There's no telling how she will take it." Then, as if she could not bear to see the infliction of a painful punishment upon her own child, the wife and mother turned and hurried above stairs to dress for dinner.

In the far room, reclining upon a cloud of oriental pillows, was his daughter, his only child. The major slowed his pace. Something quickened within him. There was a tug at his heart strings.

That Millie Stansbury was beautiful, many might doubt. But that she was sweet, with her calm charm of maidenly innocence fortified and matured by love, no one would deny.

When that calm look met the fevered face of the father, a shadow swept over the sensitive face. She seemed to divine evil, like a prophetess. She half raised herself, all eagerness and question.

"Brace yourself, little girl," began the banker abruptly, lowering his head half guiltily at the scourge he was about to inflict; "brace yourself and don't make a scene, I beg of you. Disappointments come to us all in this life. You might better know the truth once and for all."

The little figure stiffened. The calm face was drawn with pain.

"Your *fiancé*, John Marks, is——"

The listener stopped breathing. "What—what?" she gasped.

"Bankrupt!" finished the father bluntly.

Instantly the supple figure relaxed that rigid pose of torturing suspense. A smile broke over her fair features, like a sunset ray upon a storm cloud.

"Oh, is that all?" she murmured.

The major laughed, but the chuckle was hard and bitter.

"Is that all?" he echoed cynically. Then in tones of patronizing pity he went on: "Is it possible that you can calmly view the prospect of a young man suddenly thrown out upon the world with a fifty thousand dollar debt upon his shoulders for the rest of his natural life—a pauper, an outcast of fortune——"

"Oh, papa! Please, please!——"

"And one who was only yesterday a millionaire, nor think that his condition is something terrible?"

The daughter moved nervously upon her divan, smoothing a bit of lace to conceal her agitation. "Oh, never fear," she said lightly. "Jack will get another million quickly enough."

A laugh broke in upon the tender and confident treble. "He will, eh? Perhaps he owns a gold mine."

"Oh, he has something better than that, papa—here!" she said quickly, laying her finger tips placed against her white forehead significantly.

The banker grew ironical. "Brains, eh?" he murmured. "Poor little innocent! If you only knew what a million dollars are—aye, what even a single dollar is—my child, you would not chatter so like a magpie. No, my dear. This is the end of John Marks, rest assured."

"Listen!" cried the girl, rising to her feet. "Whatever John Marks was, or whatever he is, remember that I love him—love him not for what he had, and what has this day been taken from him, but for what he is, of which he can never be deprived. What! Shall I renounce the man to whom I am sworn with your own consent, simply because these jackals in the pits have trapped him and rent his fortune to pieces? Shall I forsake him now when, more than ever in his life, he needs a woman's sympathy and courage?" She paused, breathless from the very heat of her impassioned vindication. "Ah, father," she added, falling back and covering her face with her hands, "if you believe that, you do not know a woman's heart, least of all my own."

The major was dumb with amazement. He had never heard such words from those lips before. They seemed to open to his eyes a hidden mine of wealth, yet of menacing dangers, too. Suddenly, ere he could speak, there came the voice of the maid from beyond announcing: "Prince von Marlane!"

Millie's whole attitude and feature changed in the twinkling of an eye. She turned and would have fled headlong had not her father seized and retained her. "Where are you going, Millie?"

"To my room," she answered in a whisper. "I am in no mood to see the prince——"

"But I have invited him. He is my guest. You must receive him!"

The fluttering creature had torn herself from his grasp and turned upon him from the threshold. "I am sorry, papa, but I find it impossible to meet the prince today. I could not be civil to him—I should insult him——"

"Hush!"

The financier bowed his head in thought. Such rebellion! such strength of will and purpose! He was struck dumb, realizing for the first time that he had met in his little daughter a superior, and that he stood vanquished.

Suddenly the banker felt a light touch upon his arm. Turning, he confronted the portly person of the nobleman.

"Your pardon, my dear prince," said the major, breaking from his brown study. "Be seated, pray. Mrs. Stansbury will be here in a few moments. Betty, please go up and announce Prince von Marlane to Mrs. Stansbury, then bring up a large bottle from the choice bin, with glasses and wafers. My throat is parched. Hurry, please. Ah, ha! prince," cried the strategist, returning to his guest, "wasn't that a *grand coup*? That's the way we do things here in America. Doesn't it fairly take your breath away?"

"I concede, sir, that it is all somewhat startling," replied the nobleman.

"But, of course," went on the banker, "this is all *entire nous*, you

understand. Why, if they once suspected that I had a hand in young Marks' overthrow, these walls would fall in and crush me."

The prince lifted his eyebrows and gave a silent gesture of satisfaction.

"Yes, sir, prince, I am just one hundred thousand dollars richer than I was at ten o'clock this morning. Not a bad day's work, eh?"

"Indeed!" murmured the nobleman, drawing a deep breath, as if half that sum would instantly relieve him of the necessity of putting his princely coronet in pawn to a tradesman's heiress. Still he kept rolling his eyes about as if he expected to see the welcome face peeping in upon him from behind some one of the curtains or tapestries that lined the magnificent chamber.

"Mrs. Stansbury will be here presently," said the major. "As for my daughter, prince, I—ahem—I fear that she is not quite well this afternoon. That's not to be wondered at, seeing that the cyclone left little or nothing of her lover's fortune and much less of his—er—matrimonial chances, eh?"

He gave his guest a keen wink. The recipient smiled gratefully, even hopefully.

"Ah, the wine is here, my dear prince," exclaimed the banker, rising and leading the way into a little chamber opening from the tea room. "We will pledge the fortune of the new condition of things. But that was a great stroke, sir, indeed a great stratagem, and worthy of a master. Here's renewed fortune, my friend, and success to our undertaking." He began filling the glasses with the sparkling wine from the frosted mouth. "You see, my wife is a very ambitious woman, prince. You understand——"

"Your health, sir!" sighed the nobleman, somewhat embarrassed.

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## CHAPTER II.—THE ONE SECRET RESERVED FROM EVEN A SWEETHEART.

In a cosy nook in the great Stansbury library, Millie had found a safe refuge where she might give vent to her secret sorrow.

"Where can he be now—poor Jack?" she murmured. Then she heard a step—a familiar step that gave her a thrill of joy. Turning, Millie uttered a cry of delight as she beheld John Marks there in the very flesh, with his arms outstretched to receive her. There was a look of triumph rather than despair upon the strong young face.

"Oh, Jack, Jack!" exclaimed the girl. "When did you come? How did you know I was here?"

"One question at a time, please," rejoined the lover, closing his arms about the fair form that nestled to him clingly. "Tim, the older butler, let me in at the lower side door when the maid, evidently on orders, refused to allow me to enter in befitting state at the front."

"The maid refused to allow you to come in?"

"No, but evidently somebody in higher authority did. Tim saw my extremity, and beckoning me to the side street, told me that he had seen you here a few moments since, so here I came."

"But I expected that you would wear a face longer than that bronze Dante yonder. Why are you not half dead with mortification and defeat?"

The lover smiled. "One rebuff doesn't make a surrender," he replied. "Then you have already heard? I was in hopes that I might break the news to you myself."

"Then it is true, Jack? It is all true that papa has told me? You are——"

"Yes; clean dead broke, if that's what you mean. Moreover, I am fifty thousand or more to the bad. Hard lines, eh?"

"Hard lines?" was the shocked rejoinder in answer to this calm, even frivolous confession. "Why, I think it's simply terrible."

"No doubt—as people take those things generally," said the young financier, settling down upon a couch and drawing her beside him. Then his face clouded. "But say, little sweetheart, it isn't going to make any difference with this love of yours——"

The white hand was uplifted, silencing him. "How could you ask such a thing, Jack?" was the half reproachful query. "I love you, and I shall be true through adversity as in prosperity. Don't you believe me?"

"I believe you, God bless you!" was the lover's broken whisper. He half rose. "That is all I came to convince myself of, Millie, before I go," he followed. "I could not leave without this one sweet assurance——"

"You are going?" murmured the amazed one, still clinging to him.

"I must."

"But I have so many things to ask you—so many things to say to you, Jack. Where are you going?"

"I am leaving on the seven ten for Maine. Pressing business. I shall be gone for a week. You see, my ship is coming in."

He gave her a look which mystified her. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I shall return to Wall Street within a week with a million dollars in gold; and then, zip!" And he made a lunge with an imaginary sabre, as if dealing an adversary a death blow.

Millie smiled sadly. "Don't trifle, dear, I beg of you," was her mild reproof.

"I was never more serious in my life, Millie; never. My ship, I tell you. Give me a ten days' leave of absence, and if I don't return with a cool million dollars——"

"Have you the lamp of Aladdin?" she asked in a whisper.

"Something better than that, my love. Oh, never fear." I know that I am jeered at, scorned, and served up as a plucked 'angel'; but mark me, I shall yet bring these villifiers to their knees till they howl for mercy."

The listener turned away. "I don't see why you are so mysterious about it all—that is, with me, Jack. This mysterious source of your wealth is the only thing between us. If you would only tell me that you have discovered a mine somewhere——"

"But I haven't, Millie. Why a gold mine is nothing to the thing I have discovered."

"Have you unearthed the secrets of the ancient alchemists? Do you mean to say that you manufacture gold——"

"What! those old idiots? Why, they never discovered anything at all. Do you suppose that you can make light, or air, or water, or any of the basic elements? Bah! you can only find and take nature's treasures wherever she has stored them. Gold is not to be manufactured by man; it must be found where nature conceals it——"

"But you say that you have not discovered a mine——"

"No."

"Nor found the lost treasury of the Incas, the Venetians, the emperors of Rome, or Napoleon?"

"Oh, nonsense! There were no such lost treasuries. The gold I have discovered has never yet been touched by human hands other than my own."

"Nor has this fortune been left you by your ancestors——"

"My forefathers all died poor men." Marks glanced at his watch. "But this will never do. I must leave tonight, and I have a thousand things to attend to. Oh, you will understand it all in good time, my little heroine. Only be true, be true——"

"Never fear, Jack. But it is all so strange; so wonderful. I cannot believe, and yet I must believe, for you tell me, and I know it must be so." The plaintive voice was smothered in his parting embrace.

"You shall yet believe and know the truth, and all the world, too, in good time. Trust me."

"Hark!" was the quick interruption.

"What is it?"

"I thought I heard a step—father's." She pushed her lover toward the further door. "Perhaps, Jack, it will be just as well that you do not meet him at this time——"

"Yes," said the young man savagely, "it would be much better—for him. Good by!"

Millie turned as her lover fled, and confronted the pompous figure at the other door.

"Where is he?" cried the major. Then not seeing the object of his search, he concluded, with a hard taunt: "Fled, eh? A fugitive from his creditors, eh? A renegade from justice——"

"Father!" came the shrill cry, like the scream of a wounded bird, "why do you persecute him and me? Jack has done nothing dishonorable. Those vipers have stung him and he is down. But, mark me! he will return within ten days and pay dollar for dollar."

A hard laugh greeted these words. "Will he, though! Where will he get the money?"

"I don't know. But he says that he will get it, and when my Jack says that he will, he *will*!" There was something savage in this outburst of vindication. For a single instant she stood there, till everything seemed swimming about her in a torrent of tears, then she turned abruptly and fled.

The banker drew back for a moment's thought; then like one inspired he hurried to an upper chamber, where he made a hurry call on the telephone. "The Bankers' Detective Bureau," he commanded, "Cortlandt, 1641, quick!" Then, the connection having been made, he added breathlessly:

"Sergeant, my suspicions are well founded. That young mountebank of whom I told you today leaves tonight for Maine on the seven ten. Put two detectives on his track, and shadow him to the end, for I am convinced that there is something wrong. If he attempts to leave the country, nab him. No time to lose. Do you understand?"

Then having heard the low assurance, "All right," from the far end of the wire, the financier went below to his noble guest with his nose in the air, like a man who has performed a neat bit of strategy.

### CHAPTER III.—A SURPRISE PARTY FOR THE MAJOR.

It was the crowning night of the opera season. There was a brilliant party in one of the first tier boxes at the Metropolitan. Two weeks had scarcely elapsed since the events recorded in the preceding chapters.

The regal Mrs. Stansbury had clustered about her representatives of the ultra exclusive set, in whose midst, resplendent in diamonds and rare lace, she was chief luminary, with Prince von Marlane the lion in extraordinary.

At the noble guest's right hand sat the sole daughter and heir to the Stansbury millions. She was the belle of the grand horseshoe, the magnet for many admiring glasses. There was an expression of calm pleasure upon her fair face, yet there was a shade of anxiety there, too.

Major Stansbury was half hidden among the draperies in the rear of the box. He hated music, for it made him brood on the darker side of things. In very truth, the major was not in the best of spirits. A heavy banquet, followed by the heavier pomposities of Wagnerian opera, did not serve to lighten his mental processes. The major had heard rumors. They were very disquieting, and filled him with vague monitions of evil.

In the midst of his perturbations, the Wall Street magnate felt a light touch upon his shoulder. On looking up, he saw the Hon. Stanislaus Debberly, a life long friend and a co-manipulator on 'Change.

The newcomer half greeted the banker, then sank on the arm of the chair. "See here, major," he said in a teasing whisper, "will you tell me what this means?" He was unfolding noiselessly a page of the *Financial Bulletin* of the current date.

The gold rimmed glasses came from their hiding place, and the major's keen eyes swept down the following lines:

Consternation reigns in the bear pits. The good "angel" has returned. Not alone this, but he has been caught in the act of withdrawing several million dollars in gold from the United States Mint, having previously deposited there the necessary virgin bricks and bars to Uncle Sam's entire satisfaction. Before the Exchange closed this afternoon, the president announced publicly "that inasmuch as John Marks had discharged every outstanding obligation, he had been reinstated to full membership on the floor of the Exchange." Three banks hold his reserve funds, and the people who thought that the young Napoleon of Finance met his Waterloo in General Electric are now thinking other things. One fact is certain. It is not every Wall Street operator who can go broke one week, with fifty thousand or more to the bad besides, take a ten days' trip into some unknown Golden Eldorado, and return with enough valuable material to make Uncle Sam roll him out eighteen kegs of double eagles in fair exchange. Now, you wise ones, go on and do your thinking!



Major Stansbury's eyes smarted when he finished the item. He passed it back with a trembling hand. "Where on God's green earth did the scoundrel get that gold?" he moaned in amazement.

"Do you actually believe any such yarn?" asked his friend incredulously.

"Do I? Unfortunately, sir, I am compelled to believe it," said the major. "I have heard rumors all the afternoon, but the authority of the *Bulletin* is absolutely unquestioned. I have taken its word for twenty years. Egad, sir, my daughter was right, then. Marks has kept his promise."

The roar of the orchestra drowned his mumblings.

"Well, Debberry," he said, rising, so that he might put his plans before his friend with precision, "it all amounts to this. We must stand together on another deal."

"Aye, sir, the very thing," voted the Honorable Stanislaus.

"He's fair game, and we'll pluck him easier than we did before."

"Ah, but these young rascals soon learn things."

"So do we old ones. Call at my office tomorrow at ten o'clock, and we will map out the contest. I have manifold reasons for downing this young upstart."

"So I perceive, major," said the other, with a wink in the direction of the nobleman, who was moving closer to the fair one as the music increased in tender rapture.

"And you must stand by me as you did before. Besides, did you not clear a good forty thousand in that last plucking? There is no reason why you should not double it this time. We don't have gems of this color strewn at our feet every day. Will you call?"

The Honorable Stanislaus was silent. His eyes were intent upon the distance, as if studying the identity of some forms hurrying down the gloomy corridor. "Jove!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Speaking of 'angels'——"

"What?"

"It is he—young Marks."

"Coming here?" whispered the host in alarm, eying a straight form in evening dress advancing jauntily as one who had not a care nor ambition in all the world.

The major stepped to the door, barring the passage. The noise of the finale of the fourth act and the clapping of hands for the encore ceased.

"Good evening, major!" said Marks at the threshold.

"Excuse me, sir," rejoined the host with hauteur, "but unless I am mistaken, you are not an invited guest here this evening."

The voice was heard throughout the box, and every guest sat dumfounded—all but one. She had risen.

The young man bowed. "You have been misinformed, Major Stansbury," he said politely.

"Indeed!" responded the financier. "Pray, upon whose invitation, sir, are you here, then?"

"Upon mine, father!"

The host turned. His daughter stood before him with her head imperi-

ously thrown back. Then she made room at her side, even drawing a chair between herself and the noble lion of the box party, saying with infinite charm and ease, "Mr. Marks, will you do me the kindness?"

The newcomer pressed forward through the ranks of astonished guests.

"The audacity!" mumbled the major, grinding his teeth, while the prince scowled and the hostess fairly blazed with mortification and defeat; but the radiant daughter was triumphant and serene.

For a few moments the silence was ominous. There were a few common-places between the lovers.

"Awfully glad to welcome you back, you dear boy," playfully the young girl whispered in the enraptured man's ear, fairly lifting him into the empyrean. "I am kept posted on your doings. They tell me that you have been reinstated on 'Change. Oh, but won't papa be wild when he hears it.

"A matter of small importance," interrupted the lover, who had evidently something of moment on his mind. "I came here on a larger mission. I am bound to have the truth from your own lips, Millie." The speaker grew grave, paling visibly as he spoke.

The fair listener was silent.

"You have accepted Prince von Marlane."

For a moment Millie stopped breathing. Then she widened her eyes upon the man at her side who was quivering with suspense. There was a dash of fire in the cynical glauce as she said, "Indeed! I had not heard."

Marks drew a sigh of wonder. "Is it not so reported in the evening papers? See! Every opera glass in the house is leveled straight this way."

Millie now shrank from the popular gaze, her face ablaze.

"Read it yourself," went on the lover, unfolding a clipping and laying it in her gloved hand, then watching her face as she read the headlines. "You observe that your father has not taken pains to deny it, but rather——"

"Enough!" murmured the girl. With a nervous movement she tore the offending clipping to bits, and tossed the fragments to the floor. "So much for my acceptance of Prince von Marlane!" she whispered, giving her lover such a glance that he doubted and feared no more.

"Thank you, and God bless you, Millie!" was all he could say.

"Fortune has smiled upon you, Jack, I take it," she remarked, after an instant.

"She generally does when one works so faithfully and earnestly for her favors," he replied.

"But isn't the fee rather excessive?" she interposed. "Ten days' labor for a million dollars——"

"Ten days?" echoed the financier in injured amazement. Then bowing his head solemnly, he added, "Ah, Millie, if you only knew—if only I dared tell you!" He checked himself with strange suddenness.

The little woman felt a strange pang, but remained silent. She turned her attention by main force toward the people on the stage, but their sighings and rantings were not for her. She seemed oblivious to all save that mys-

terious query of her heart: "A million for the asking, and no man the wiser, no man the poorer? How wonderful!"

Then came the grand finale of the fifth act.

"You must come and take supper with us," she said brightly.

"Oh, impossible, Millie. I should not have intruded here had I not been wild with suspense and fear. I felt that I could not go to my rest tonight without seeing you and hearing from your own lips the truth."

"But you must come. I insist. I will take all the responsibility. Oh, please do, Jack," she pleaded in whispers that none could withstand, "I have so much to say to you—to ask you." And she told herself: "I will wring from him the secret of his great wealth before the light of another day, or I am no strategist."

"I'll go," said Marks, at last won over; "but mind you, if any trouble comes of it——"

"Never fear!" was the exultant reply. "Leave it all to me."

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#### CHAPTER IV.—A DETECTIVE'S CHASE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

MAJOR STANSBURY was leading his box party through the crowded corridor toward the street. He was trying to think of a way out of his dilemma. A dainty supper awaited his friends at his mansion, but he had resolved that John Marks should never enter his house again.

"I think I will take them round the corner to Frith's," he muttered. "It is so much easier to snub a man in public——"

He felt a tug at his elbow. It was one of the uniformed attendants.

"A gentleman in the café yonder, sir."

"Well, what of him?" said the major testily.

"He wants to see you on very urgent business, alone."

Somewhat mystified, the financier turned to his guests, directing them to rejoin Frith's, the Honorable Debberry to order the supper. The major promised to rejoin them in a few moments.

Down through the side corridor the banker followed the attendant. Entering the marble walled café, the major noticed at the further table a thin, almost shabby little man bent in thought over a glass of amber liquor which he had not touched.

"There is the gentleman," said the uniformed pilot.

"Major Stansbury, I believe, sir?" began the little man in black, rising.

"Yes," said the financier with some bluntness. "What do you want?"

"Ten minutes of your time, sir?" responded the other with a quick glance of the eye that was like the drawing of a hidden dagger blade. "Be seated, please."

The banker slid into a chair, studying this nonentity who was assuming the airs of one in authority. The sluggish manner, the shabby attire, the vapid expression of countenance—all these hid the simian acuteness, the daring persistence, and the wide knowledge of one of the world's foremost detectives. The sloth of a pig concealed the brilliancy of a general at a crisis. He had made himself one of those nobodies who can go anywhere in this

world and be absolutely overlooked; yet he was as all seeing as fate. "You are the detective of the Bankers' Association——"

"Precisely, sir. I am the man who was detailed to shadow a certain young financier whose source of income, from the mystery surrounding it, appears to shield a great crime."

The banker bent forward, narrowing his eyes upon the colorless face which seemed like a papier maché mask through which somebody within was talking, for not only did the features never change expression, but the lips scarcely moved as he spoke. "Well, sir, what success?"

"Little or much, as you choose to regard it, sir."

"The scoundrel has returned, I see. He has brought another million in gold——"

"I am aware of his every movement from the time of his leaving here to his joining you in the first tier box, sir."

"And you discovered where he got that million?"

"I have. But, if I must confess it, sir, the success I have had——"

The banker bowed closer during this little pause; so close, indeed, that he could hear the ticking of the watch in the little man's pocket. "Well?"

"Only lifts the cloak from a still greater mystery. I saw the bullion delivered into the hands of this young Sphinx, but beyond that I can vouch for nothing. I was ordered to shadow Marks, not to follow clues into unknown regions."

"But I already know that he has the money; what I sent you to discover is where he got it." The banker was losing his patience.

"You gave orders otherwise, sir. Have a cigar. You are getting restless, and it will excite comment. We are better unobserved."

The listener took the Havana like a man hypnotized by a higher power, lighting and puffing at the weed nervously. "Well, I am all ears."

The detective drew a deep breath, as a diver makes ready for a headlong plunge. "In the first place, I overtook your man at the Grand Central Depot. He had bought a ticket for a little seaport town, called Hampton, in New Hampshire. I did likewise, settling myself in the same car. The journey thither was without note. On arriving at the insignificant little village the next day, I found he had purchased a stout team of horses and a heavy wagon—bought them outright, mind you, with the explanation that he was going through the district to buy country produce. I immediately bought a horse, and with a blanket for a saddle, followed him for some miles at dusk as he drove on the beach road toward Rye."

The banker shifted uneasily. He was respectfully silent, however.

"As the wheels of the heavy wagon sank into the wet sand almost to the hubs, and as the road was infrequently traveled, it was possible to follow our mysterious gold searcher into the most impenetrable thicket. At a point where the underbrush approaches the ocean quite close the driver paused, tethered his horses, then went down on the beach, where he turned his back to the sea and scanned the cliffs. Evidently satisfied with his bearings, he started through the wood straight up the difficult and perilous climb toward the summit of the ridge. I concealed myself near by, having first examined the

wagon and the boxes, which gave me no clue. Soon, somewhat alarmed at his long stay, I made my way to the beach and scanned the dim ridge above me. The clouds had thickened and the sky was absolutely rayless, but upon the apex of the highest point of the ridge above I saw a small, red light. It seemed to grow in intensity as I stood there spellbound at what appeared to be a crimson star just come up over the verge of the cliff. Then I heard the man come tearing down the mountain side as though pursued by a thousand fiends."

"Most extraordinary!" murmured the banker.

"That proved to me that our man was signaling seaward. Turning, I scanned the ocean horizon. It was absolutely void and black. Soon he came bounding down toward the beach, passing so close to me that I heard his heavy breathing. Reaching the water's edge, he ran along some distance, then bent down to light something placed on the rocks. Then he chased furiously back again, and at a point perhaps a quarter of a mile along the beach repeated this signal. Then he seated himself on the bare rocks at the water's edge very close to me, scanning the horizon with a strong glass. Soon I noticed that the light on the beach to the northeast burned a clear, brilliant green, the one to the southwest a piercing white, and the flame in the mountain apex was more dazzlingly crimson than either now—a blood scarlet flame that lighted up the whole barren promontory. Judging, then, that these signals were to be seen from a great distance, I knew that it would be hours before the response would be forthcoming.

"I guessed rightly. It was along toward daybreak before the answering signals came, and then so close were they that it seemed only a stone's throw. As the sudden flame on the strange vessel burst up and died away again, I descried the hull of the ship. It seemed to speed through the water as cautiously as a sea serpent, with neither sail nor signal lights. The lonely watcher answered the signal with another bit of crimson flash powder, at the water's edge; then the ship swerved a little to the south, and stood motionless.

"Soon I heard the splash of a lifeboat, then another, and another, but never the sound of human voice. The men worked as carefully and guardedly as if they had eyes like some jungle animals which see better in the thickest, deadliest night than in the daylight. As the boats neared the shore, once more the man burned a signal, though so close were they that it seemed even a whisper might have been heard across the water. What happened when the men met I cannot imagine, for they seemed to be conversing in a sort of dumb show. I crept along from rock to rock, slipping over the slimy boulders, approaching the spot of landing as near as I dared. I descried the faint outlines of no less than seven men, each with a heavy burden, forming ranks, as it were, and following their commander up from the noiseless sands, into the wood, there depositing their treasure in the wagon awaiting them. Everything was conducted with the clockwork precision of military discipline. Four trips were made to the mysterious ship, with each return the approach being very cautious and guarded. Then, without even a salute or a hand shake, the little black crew went back to their vessel, which forth-

with disappeared as silently as it had come, like some ghostly craft sailing back to the under world."

"Astounding!" exclaimed the banker. Then with a keen glance into the other's face he added: "What is your opinion, sir?"

"I have none. I am not paid for opinions—only for ascertaining facts."

The millionaire winced under the other's rebuff. "But you certainly must have some vague notion of the people with whom this man is dealing," he returned.

"I have none, sir."

"Then I have," exclaimed the major savagely. "This young rascal is in league with a gang of pirates, outlaws, smugglers, water thieves. It is as plain as day."

"Indeed!" interposed the detective half cynically. "Perhaps, if you let me finish, you will not be so hasty in your conclusions."

"What more is there. He brought his cargo to New York——"

"Wait a bit. You must have due regard for detail. It makes up the life of a detective, sir."

"Go on, then," murmured the banker, settling back to listen to another league of that monotone doled out with such precision.

"With his precious load, the young man whipped up out of the sand carpeted ambush, but he didn't get far. The load was altogether too heavy for the horses. This new trouble seemed to daze the fellow. He ran around the panting beasts where they had fallen under his urging in the damp sand like one possessed. After a while he considered the best thing to do was to unload some of the freight, which he did with great reluctance, digging a pit in the sand heaps with his hands, depositing there perhaps a quarter of his cargo. Then, the horses having rested, and the load being lighter, he drove out of the ruts and proceeded till he reached a lonely railway station thirty miles inland. He had evidently intended to return to his treasure trove in the sand bank, but daylight broke over him too soon, and he took the risk of leaving it there in that lonely spot where the water would soon obliterate every trace of his coming and going. That treasury, sir, is there yet. I dug down and carried away with me a single small bar, smoothing over the place more carefully than ever he did. Here is the trophy, sir."

Before the astonished eyes of the banker, the detective drew from his inner coat pocket a small, oblong slab of virgin gold, laying it carelessly upon the table as if it were a mere paper weight.

The banker glared at it, seeming almost to fear to touch it. He simply sat breathless, his eyes blinking, his face bloodless.

"I followed our man to New York," continued the detective, "and saw his cargo deposited with Uncle Sam, for which he received the stamped coin of the country. You know the rest. Now let me tell you something about this gold bar which will cause you to change your opinion with regard to that man's connection with alleged pirates and sea outlaws."

"Well, sir?" was the eager query.

"I had this gold assayed today. Do you know what it shows up in fineness?"

"Doubtless pretty well," said the financier.

"It shows ninety nine and seventy nine one hundredths of absolute purity."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the financier. "Why, the finest strain of Colorado ore doesn't show any such fineness as that."

"I am aware of that. I am also aware that there is no gold dug from God's rich earth, except that which has been purified by a most elaborate chemical process, which shows such fineness. Do you see what this proves? It proves conclusively that this ore was never used before by man—that it cannot possibly be the booty of pirates; that it never was mined from the earth, for the earth produces no ore of that high degree of excellence."

"Where in the name of heaven did the scoundrel get it then?" cried the banker. "Did he make it?"

"Make gold?" said the man in black with an upward curl of the lip. "You know better than to ask that, sir, with all due respect. Gold was never made by human hands, and never will be. It is an axiom of chemical science."

"But where could he have found this treasure? Where did it come from? Who are these silent people in league with him? What is that mysterious craft, and whence does it hail?" The banker's eyes were fairly blazing with eagerness.

The little man in black only shrugged his shoulders. "Guess!" he said with a smile of irony. "As for me, I gave it up long ago." After a pause he resumed, "You have here my report to date. What have I to do further in your service?"

"Everything," answered the financier. "Keep a watch on him daily, and make a report when anything important occurs. I am convinced that there is somewhere a secret villainy. We need but to wait our opportunity. Within thirty days young Marks will be bankrupt again, and when he makes another dash to his mysterious argonaut for reinforcements we shall have United States revenue cruisers to overhaul the whole gang. You have done well, sir. I congratulate you. Continue to work in the same spirit, and you shall be properly rewarded. I must rejoin my guests. I have left them too long already. This is very mysterious business. We shall land something before long, or my name is not Stansbury. Good night, sir!" And with a flourish of supreme self satisfaction, the major started on a quick pace toward Frith's.

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#### CHAPTER V.—THE OUTCOME OF ANOTHER CRISIS.

No sooner did it come to the knowledge of Wall Street that John Marks had plunged into Industrials, forsaking the wreck of General Electric, than war was declared.

Quite the most powerful of the secret combinations of capital and skill directed against the young Napoleon was that of Major Stansbury and his allies. It did not seem possible that against such a powerful and wise aggregation of forces anything could prevail. The major arrived at his

home at midnight and departed before the family were at breakfast. He pretended to be overwhelmed with business engagements, but in reality he had not the heart to face his daughter at table, fearing a woman's keen intuitions more than all the allied forces of the Street. Meanwhile, for five weeks the battle raged fiercely.

Marks and Miss Stansbury met almost daily in spite of the rush of affairs, sometimes at the Fifth Avenue mansion, sometimes at the house of a friend, even now and then taking in a *matinée* together, or a walk in the park. It was these moments of respite from a bitter ordeal that gave Marks the courage and strength to struggle on against such odds.

On the eventful day of the great crisis of the battle, Millie Stansbury, from her safe refuge in the visitors' gallery of the Stock Exchange, looked down for the first time into that pit of wild beasts in their rage for John Marks' gold. The sight held her spellbound, and the whirl gave her the first taste of the intoxication of a money mad life. Wildly racing to and fro, with flying arms and faces aglow with excitement, shrieking like maniacs, the swirling mass of men tore hither and thither, one moment rich, another swept into the maelstrom and lost.

Marks left his fiancée every few moments to consult with his brokers, returning again to her side, paler, haggard, but confident. Every little visit below cost him a hundred thousand dollars. He was already four millions to the bad. It was now a question of endurance. The hand of the marker on the platform trembled as he posted the falling quotations by eighths and sixteenths, sometimes by quarters and halves. Marks, silent and self-contained, watched the figures diminish, his fortune growing less with each stroke of the fateful chalk. Suddenly along toward noon rock bottom, as it were, was struck. Counter influence began to work, and the final struggle for supremacy was on.

Would the stock go down another peg? If so, John Marks was again a bankrupt. Would it start going up? If so, the young financier would redeem himself in the eyes of the financial world.

Suddenly Millie seized her fiancé's arm with a trembling clutch. "Who are they yonder?" she murmured. She was pointing to a group of brokers who had withdrawn to the east side of the great hall of finance, and were forming, as it were, a hollow square, like an army in a losing battle.

"They are our friends, the enemy," said Marks, smiling.

"Indeed, Jack!" she cried. "Are they the monsters who downed you before, and are leagued together to do so again?"

"The very same," said Marks. "The only trouble is, they are not hanging together. Men in Wall Street are the best of friends and allies till some terrible crisis arises, then every man for himself. Now that elderly gentleman you see yonder, executing a war dance in the center of the group, is at the head of the most powerful combination against me. If they hold out together, I am a ruined man. If they do not, I am saved. I am now banking on the perfidy of friends—the backsliding of sworn allies. That man thought he had me ruined once. If he accomplishes the grand *coup* today, he will repeat the blow, but it will be more serious for me this time."



Through that rioting mass the old financier plunged on a dead run, his whole frame in a convulsion of excitement. Millie gave him one look ; then leaped up. " Jack, Jack ! " she cried. " That man is my father ! "

Marks bit his lips in silence. With a flourish he motioned his companion to her seat again. For a long time neither had the courage to speak. At last the lover broke the spell.

" Millie," he said, " I want to ask you something now—now that you know everything—that you see it all. "

" What is it, Jack ? " she murmured with quivering lip.

" Whether this day sees me a bankrupt or a millionaire, will you marry me ? "

" Yes—today, this very hour if you wish it so," she responded heartily.

" If he has wronged you, Jack—if my father has wronged you, I may right that wrong in some degree—"

" And if he goes down, Millie, I promise in turn that he shall find in me a true friend—truer than he has proven to me in my time of trouble. Is it settled, then ? You promise this willingly, my dear ? "

" With all my heart, Jack. "

" Then let come what will, I am ready. Let us leave this den of jackals. I have put up a good fight, and if the tide goes against me, so be it. We resign our fortunes to destiny, ourselves to the pleasanter task. Enough of this. I am weary of it forever. "

Marks led the way back to the street, and the lovers took a little excursion down the Bay, as light hearted as if they had never known a care in all their young lives.

It was quite nightfall when they returned to the Stansbury mansion. On the way thither Marks had bought the latest papers, poring over them with breathless interest, tearing them up as soon as he had read the headlines. He preferred to keep his destiny a secret from Millie yet a while.

The servant who opened the door gave a gasp as he recognized the pair. He was very pale, shrinking away into the shadows as if he feared he might be asked some questions. The lovers passed up the back stair almost on tiptoe. Without knowing why, Millie seemed to feel that they had entered the house of death. Misfortune had fallen there. It seemed to pervade every cranny, to cry out from every nook.

Soon voices interrupted the current of her dismal thoughts. These sounds came from the grand salon, low and pleading condolences broken in upon by groans and wails, and gnashing of rage in defeat.

Millie drew a deep breath, melting among the tapestries by the great door, unheard yet hearing all. Seizing her lover, she held him there.

" They deserted me at the crisis, the scoundrels ! " the old man was screaming, like one struggling in a sea of quicksand. " They went back on their promises—left me at the moment of greatest peril. Oh, what a fool I was to believe them ! I saw it all, but too late to rally. At the last moment I went to those for succor from whom yesterday I could have had millions, asking for thousands—paltry thousands—and I was refused. Think of that ! Refused by men whom I had made. It was Debberry who was the

first traitor. I shall never trust a human being again. This blow will kill me. I am lost, lost ! ”

The little eavesdropper who heard these heart broken utterances from her ambush could bear it no longer. With her face streaming with tears, she rushed into the great chamber where she found her father stretched out upon the divan like a gladiator with a lance through his heart, his wife by his side.

Falling to her knees beside him, she took the sufferer's hand. “ Father,” she said softly, “ you must not talk like that. You must not give up hope. You still have friends in need——”

“ Yes,” responded the old man with bitter cynicism, “ all my friends are in need just now, myself the most of all.” He arose. “ Do you know what my position is at this moment, little girl ? Have they told you—dared they tell you ? I am a bankrupt—I am worse : I owe seven millions of dollars. I bore the brunt of the whole army of combined forces, with that young scoundrel of a Marks at the head——”

“ Silence, father ! ” came the soft plea, sheathing a command. “ You must not say that now—now that John Marks is——”

The old man saw something mysterious in that look. “ What ? ” he gasped.

“ My husband,” she whispered slowly.

The major rose, his whole frame shaken as in a tempest. His wife, who had withdrawn to a little distance, haggard and distraught, rushed forward.

“ Millie ! ” they both cried in astonishment, “ do you mean—can you mean that you are——”

“ Yes, married ! ” said the young girl bravely. “ While this riot was raging in the Street, and fortunes were going to ruin, Jack and I stole off on our honeymoon.” She drew forth a little scroll, signed, sealed, and delivered from the suburban dominie's hands. “ An old friend of Jack's performed the ceremony, down at Averno. You see, I was afraid that you would be successful, papa, and that I might lose the man I loved.”

The major sank back speechless. What could he say now ? Nothing.

“ Jack,” called the bride into the great hall, “ come in, please, and receive your congratulations——”

“ Not quite yet,” said the young man, disclosing himself and advancing before the astonished parents. “ Congratulations afterward, business first. Major Stansbury, may I have a half hour's conversation with you alone ? ”

The defeated financier bowed.

“ Whatever you have to say, sir,” interposed the society queen with uplifted hand, “ might as well be said before his wife and yours. There are no secrets now.”

“ Very well,” said Marks, taking a seat where he could bend forward and peer into the bloodshot eyes of his vanquished adversary. “ Major, when you struck me down in the financial battle a few weeks ago, you thought you were done with me forever. You see how mistaken you were. I appreciated the fact that you wished to further a brilliant alliance with a foreign potentate ; but as I was the first on the field, and had already won the

prize, it was not quite fair to wrest it from me, particularly by foul means. However, I will not reproach, but prove that there is loyalty still in the world. I told Millie that if this day saw me a bankrupt we should leave the scene of conflict together. If, on the contrary, I won, you should never want for anything that was in my power to grant you. I will pay every dollar of your debt, major, and secure your home and present comforts to you."

Major Stansbury's head was bowed. He seemed to be listening to some angel in a dream. He could not realize his misfortune at first; now he could not seem to grasp the fact of salvation at hand. It was his wife who woke him to a sense of gratitude.

"Mr. Marks," she said, quite broken in spirit, "if you have it in your heart to do this—all this, after what has been done against you—you will save two lives, and be in our eyes deserving of greater reward than any man that walks the earth."

"I have had my reward," said Marks quietly, encircling Millie's waist. "I took my reward before I had earned it, but now I am willing to pay the price in loyalty and love. I would be unjust to the sweetest woman on earth if I did otherwise."

The major had stretched out his hands, seizing Marks' own with a sort of frenzy. "Can you do this for me, John Marks?" he moaned. "You, after all I have done to bring you down to the dust——"

"I can, and I will," said the young man heartily, "for Millie's sake."

The two rose and left the room. In the hallway a liveried flunky plucked the major by the sleeve. "The little man in black is at the lower door, sir. Must see you instantly."

A thrill shot through the tall frame. "Excuse me for a moment," said the banker, addressing Marks, who was advancing through the front door to find a cab.

At the foot of the marble steps John confronted the junior partner of his principal brokerage firm. He had been on the hunt for his client, and was in great excitement. They held a short, sharp conversation, and then Marks went back up the mansion steps. Millie met him at the door.

"Your father has no idea how badly he was hit," said Jack in a whisper. "My broker tells me that his debts amount to the sum of twenty millions."

"And your gains?" gasped Millie.

"Will scarcely equal them. We shall be compelled to make another call on the mysterious ship." He paused, giving her a strange look.

"There must be no secrets now, love," she said. "When you visit your mysterious Golden Eldorado again I must go with you. As your wife, Jack, it is my right. Don't you think so, dear?"

"Very well," he said. "It will be a hard journey, I give you fair warning. We shall be compelled to start this evening, if all things point in the direction they appear now. Tonight I am a twenty millionaire, tomorrow a bankrupt again; but, thank Heaven, your father will be a free man, his home saved, and prosperity restored."

"God bless you, my good husband," she cried. "I will be ready——"

"Say nothing to any one. We shall be back again within a few days,

and then settle down to enjoy life in peace and quiet. This pace is killing. Where is your father? Call him, please, while I hail a cab. It means a struggle for the rest of the night."

Millie crept down stairs, where she found her father in earnest converse with a little man in black whose averted face she could not recognize.

"And you have already given the alarm to the authorities?" said the major, trembling.

"I did as you told me, sir," returned the other gravely.

"And they have started in search of the mysterious ship?"

"They have."

"They must never capture her," cried the financier. "You must countermand the order."

"It is impossible, major. What should have changed you so suddenly? You believe there is something villainous in this whole business, do you not?"

"I have reasons to change my mind with regard to the whole affair. I want the authorities headed off. I cannot explain matters, but——"

"How about the treasury in the sand bank, major? There must be at least two millions in gold there. I have made all arrangements to go there with you and get it directly you give the word."

"Indeed!" said the nonplussed financier, perceiving himself in a trap.

"Certainly, sir. It was all planned by yourself. You were to foot the expenses if it did not pan out, and to pay me handsomely if it did."

"It must not be!" moaned the major at last. "That treasure is sacred now. You must not go near the place."

"But my money, sir. You have promised me large rewards for my efforts, and now that you have been swamped, I see no other way of getting my just dues than——"

"You must not go near the place, sir. You do so at your peril," cried the banker, quivering in every fiber.

"But if you are no longer my employer, I shall do what I please——"

The major seized the shabby man in a grip of steel. "You touch that gold at your peril. Do what is right by me and you shall be properly rewarded. Do otherwise and——"

"Papa, Jack is waiting for you. Won't you hurry?"

The major leaped to discover an eavesdropper. "Remember, sir!" he cried to the disappearing detective; and with these words of threat and alarm, the banker went up stairs in a quandary. "I must tell Marks instantly," he mused. "Yet how is it possible, after all I have done?"

"Come, major! Not a single moment to lose," came the brusque call from beyond; and with bowed head he disappeared with John Marks toward the two wheelers in waiting.

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## CHAPTER VI.—A STRANGE HONEYMOON.

THE rest of that eventful evening the bride devoted to preparing for the most mysterious journey of her life. Often she had besought her lover to tell her the source of his fabulous wealth, but he had only drawn a deep

sigh and put her off with a phrase now become trite in her ears, "Wait a little, dear. It is such a long story, and to rightly understand the whole you should know every detail."

But now the few sentences she had overheard between her father and the little man in black gave her another thrill of alarm. "That treasure is sacred now. You touch it at your peril!" What treasure could he have referred to, and was it possible that her father was in a secret of which she, a wife, was denied a knowledge? Her cheeks burned with the thought, and her heart beat fast with what she considered an injustice, though just why she should feel so was not quite clear to her.

Jack came at ten o'clock, as he had arranged, and was in anything but the mood in which a young bridegroom ought to be. There was something fierce and terrible in his very look, Millie thought; and when he bade her make a dash for the carriage in waiting, she almost forgot to embrace her mother who stood there in the doorway with a very pale face. In fact, since the downfall of her husband's fortunes, this woman of mountainous pride and ambition had walked the earth like an inhabitant of another sphere. She was silent, trembling, wild eyed as a gazelle that expects momentarily to feel the sharp pang of the hunter's bullet through her heart.

"The major will be here shortly," said Marks, taking pity on that deplorable attitude, "and you need have no alarm, Mrs. Stansbury. Your husband's matters are all arranged, to the slightest detail. It took my last dollar, and I was compelled to borrow money for this—er—little honeymoon of ours; but you may rest in peace tonight. The major is solvent, and his fortunes are already on the mend. Be of good cheer, for, believe me, tomorrow you will find your star in the ascendant."

"God bless you!" was all the reply the stricken woman could utter. Then she turned away and sank into the gloom.

The next morning Millie found herself in a quaint little New Hampshire village; and when, after a plain country breakfast at the hotel, her husband drove up to the door with a great lumbering dray, drawn by a pair of stocky Normans, she regarded him with amazement. The ease with which everything was done, and Jack's familiarity with this strange place, mystified her more than she dared express.

"I have brought you two great woolen shawls, Millie," was all he said as she got into the scarcely elegant conveyance and sat down upon the springless seat at his side. "We may spend two days and nights in this same chariot of the gods," he added.

"Oh, really!" exclaimed Millie. "How very exciting!"

"See here, little dear," said Marks, whipping up the heavy team, "if you think that this is an old time romantic and poetic argonautic expedition, you are mightily mistaken. There will be no bearding of feudal barons in their fortresses, no looting of kingly treasures. It is going to be the most prosaic thing imaginable—unless, my dear, we are disturbed by the presence of unwelcome intruders. Then"—he drew up his waistcoat, disclosing a belt of gleaming weapons—"then perhaps, I repeat, there may be something worthy of history."

Millie was silent. Her spirits began to go down.

"By the way," asked Marks, "did you ever shoot?"

"Nothing more dangerous than the chutes on Narragansett beach," she replied with a smile.

"Then you must learn today. We have business tonight which is likely to call in the combined efforts of both of us. There is no telling."

"But I don't know a thing about revolvers and all that," said Millie with a shudder.

"You will have some hours to learn. Besides, if I have to leave you on guard at midnight for a few hours over a million or two of gold buried in the middle of a tamarack thicket, a little thing in your pocket that spits death every time its back is up will be some comfort, won't it?"

Millie drew a deep breath. Was her husband going insane?

All day long these little enigmatic conversations were carried on. Thrice during the afternoon they had made pauses in lonely spots where Millie received lessons in handling weapons; and she soon found that that from which she recoiled with some fear previously now seemed to give her a sense of security in possessing. They had provisioned themselves on the route, and when at last they burst upon the grand old ocean from the summit of a cliff, and began the difficult descent, the young bride felt a sense of relief, for she loved the sea, and it was like meeting an old friend.

Tethering their animals, Marks swung a hammock in a pleasant spot, and bundling the tired girl within, was soon lulled to sleep by the sound of the breaking waves on the desolate strand. It was fully four hours, and almost midnight when the young man, who had been watching at her side, awoke her with a light touch.

"Millie," he said softly, "it is time to begin work. Will you help me?"

The bride rose with a start, amazed to discover that it was so dark that she could scarcely see the outlines of the husband whose face was bent caressingly and assuringly above her. Rousing herself, she leaped to the ground, and after partaking of a little cold supper, strolled down to the beach in order to get accustomed to the strangeness of the place, clinging still to her husband's arm with much misgiving.

"I must leave you now for at least two hours, Millie," he said. "I know it will not be pleasant for you to stand guard here, but I see no way out of it."

"May I not go, too?" she asked with a quiver.

"You could not climb yonder crags through the thick night, could you?" he said, pointing to the peaks above which seemed almost to reach the heavens.

Millie sighed.

"I must go there," he resumed. "I must set the scarlet signal so that they may know that I am here, and come to me——"

"Who are they?" came the breathless query.

"You shall know all in a little while now. Just be seated here in the hammock, and wait for me. Keep your revolver close, and if there are any

indications of trouble from any source, fire into the air, and I will be with you instantly. Do you understand, dear?"

"Yes," said the little wife tremblingly. "I will be brave. Go, and come again as soon as ever you can."

"Never fear. I have made this climb many times, but never as swiftly as I shall now." He kissed her softly, whispering sweet encouragements, enjoined her once more to signal in case of trouble, and was gone—swallowed up in the terrible shadows that encompassed them.

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#### CHAPTER VII.—THE BEGINNING OF A MARVELOUS TALE.

THROUGH the pathless undergrowth John Marks dashed off without fear or hesitation. The further he removed himself from Millie's hiding place, however, the more appalling became the vision of possible calamity. He reproached himself that he should have left her at all, unprotected in the loneliest and most abandoned spot at midnight, with a treasure of two millions of dollars in gold not a dozen feet away; yet he saw no way to accomplish his end otherwise. She could not have come; he could not have remained there. And he dared trust no outsider. There was nothing to do but to gain the summit with all speed, then return to her instantly.

At last he reached his goal. He set his signal and lighted it with unsteady hand. Far below he heard the sullen roar of waters, and now and then the screech of a bird. Turning quickly, Marks took a short cut route into the depths below, making a flying leap into the chasm, landing half stunned in the underbrush.

"Don't leave me again, Jack," pleaded the trembling one piteously, after the suspense was broken, and he had rejoined her. "I shall go mad in this awful place alone."

"Never fear," was her husband's assurance. "I shall have no need to leave you again. But I have matters of importance to attend to on the beach. Make haste!"

Millie sprang to his side, clinging to his hand on the chase down the sand dunes to the water's edge. There, some distance to the north, they set another signal; then returning to a point as far south from their ambush, they set another, after which they hurried back to their quarters.

Millie saw the green and white lights cast their dazzling gleams over the black void of ocean, then raised her eyes to the crimson beacon on the crag above. She was too much mystified to put the questions which burned in her bosom, so waited the opportunity which she felt confident would soon arise.

Marks now swung the hammock at a point where he could keep one eye on the sea, the other upon the most precious ten feet of land in all the country. Then they grew composed.

"Remember your promise, Jack," said Millie, after a long, thoughtful silence. "You were to explain all this to me."

Marks bowed his head, musing a moment in the stillness. The whole varied pageant of the past swept before him in vivid outlines. It stirred

him like a thrilling history of heroes in another age and clime. "Yes, Millie," he said at last, "I have promised you, and I will keep my promise. I have a strange story to tell you, but you must be patient with me if I seem over explicit. If some details weary you, you must remember that they are essential to your rightly understanding the whole weird narrative, and you must give heed to each trifling event, for upon such is the most enthralling experience founded."

"I will be patient, I will be responsive," said the young wife eagerly.

"It will be some hours yet before our signals will be answered, so there will be ample time to unravel to you what I believe to be the most amazing adventure of any scientist of modern times."

"Go on, Jack," said Millie earnestly.

"In the first place, my dear, it is necessary to state that I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth—nay, with a gold one. My father's brother was a Californian pioneer; and when he heard of the prospective son and heir, he speedily despatched a virgin gold spoon to my mother, and from it I took my first solid meal. I am sure that my nature did not partake of the glamour of the yellow delight, for I grew up the most generous and even extravagant of youngsters. My father often tried to instill into my nature something of frugality and even a commendable acquisitiveness; but I would have none of it. I had always had everything that wealth could buy; and seeing so many of my fellows without even the necessities, not to speak of the luxuries, of life, compassion made me too open of heart and purse to allow of my becoming a saver of the world's goods. The consequence was that when, at the age of fifteen, my poor father went down in the great oil crash, leaving the house without a roof, as it were, I was driven into the world with an entirely erroneous idea of life and its contingencies.

"Naturally the disillusion was a very bitter one. I was too proud to go to those to whom I had been a saving grace in time of need, and who were now beyond the pale of want; but having been indulged in boyhood with mechanisms both relating to steam and electricity, my mind turned to engineering. I first became a practical, and then an expert, consulting mechanic, finding myself, at the age of nineteen, self supporting and even on the high road to a competence.

"But to a nature like mine, I found that, however successful I might be today, tomorrow saw the fruits of my labor dissipated. Not that I indulged in riotous living and follies beyond my station; but I simply had not the power to say 'No' to a friendly call, or to the caprices of my naturally extravagant nature. I then began to study my weakness with view to overcoming it. One day a double eagle fell into my hands, and the gold piece gave me a new sensation. I realized that here was something that I must learn to love, must cherish and guard, or a ruined old age would be the result. Like a man who has made a misalliance, and forthwith makes the best of it, forcing himself to love the partner of his earthly lot, and guarding her progeny with zeal, I began to compel in my sanguine and open character a love for gold. I slept with that big coin under my pillow, feeling for it and caressing it during the wakeful hours of the night. This led me to become



a miser and pinchbeck skinflint in the eyes of my companions, and they shunned me. Men in the world will forgive almost any form of iniquity, condone almost any crime, save that of niggardliness.

"Thus was it, my dear, that within a few months I found myself almost without a speaking acquaintance. This only served to drive me deeper into my work, my midnight computations, my long drawn calculations. I lost the friends of youth, but I gained the respect of men of exact scientific knowledge, and still more rewarded myself with the fruits of wise investments. Dwelling upon gold with such persistency, it was not strange that I hovered about all places where it was to be seen—in the windows of the money brokers in Wall Street, wheeled in barrels from the mint on its way to Europe under armed guard, and particularly whenever I managed to penetrate that sealed arcanum, the assay office, where chemistry and mechanism combine to bring the virgin ore from the rock with the greatest purity. I made the acquaintance of a smelter in the assay office, and from him I learned the open secrets of gold extraction from the native quartz.

"I do not want to weary you with details; but there are a few things about gold which you may not know, and which are absolutely essential to explain in my life story in order that you may comprehend it fully."

"I am sure it cannot be otherwise than interesting, Jack," said the listener.

"Well, put in a few words, there are two conditions of gold. One is free milling gold—that is, the larger grains and nuggets of the virgin ore which separate themselves from the quartz on crushing, and which can be gathered up by the simple process of mixing with mercury, which metal takes it up by natural affinity, and from which it can afterwards be separated by a simple means. Sixty per cent of the gold in paying quartz can be extracted by this contrivance, the other forty per cent left being known as 'tailings.' To get as much as possible of this remaining forty per cent of gold from the tailings requires another and more difficult process. This gold is said to be refractory—that is, difficult to extract and separate from the crushed quartz. There are several ways of accomplishing this in more or less perfect manner; but the cyanide process is the most satisfactory.

"This process consists simply in mixing a solution of the refractory quartz with cyanide of potassium, and running through it a powerful current of electricity. The electrical affinity thus created coats the negative pole, or the cathode, with pure gold from the solution, just as in copper or silver plating. After enough is deposited there to hinder the working of the current, the gold is peeled from the cathode, and the process continued till the solution is entirely robbed of its gold. That is the matter in a nutshell.

"Naturally a cathode that is most responsive to the electrical current is bound to collect gold the fastest from the solution. Hence it is that scientists have scoured the world to find a metal that will make the best cathode. There are over sixty known metals, and about all of them were tried with more or less success. There was none that was perfect; and unless the solution of gold were very strong, it cost more to keep up the powerful current

than the value of the gold extracted would justify. Not being able to find a perfect cathode, what was there to do? Simply to go to some part of the world where gold was being mined and extracted on the mercury system, buy the tailings which contained the remaining forty per cent of the gold, and extract it by the cyanide process. You see, then, there would be no prospecting for ore, no buying up of claims. It would be simply procuring the leavings of the miners, and by a scientific process extracting the gold which was otherwise thrown away. Where was I to find these virgin fields where science had not followed the rough pioneer prospector and the miner? Naturally in Alaska."

He paused. The listener seemed in a quandary. "But you told me, Jack, that you did not get this vast treasure of gold from the earth, that it was never mined by any man. Now you tell me that in the Alaska gold fields you secured it. I don't see——"

"I told you nothing of the kind, my little skeptic. As a matter of fact, to my knowledge not a grain of it came from Alaska. You are impatient. Let me get to my story."

"But if not in Alaska, where?"

"You may guess a thousand years and you will never discover where nor how. Hear me out. I must take up the chain of events link by link in order that you may understand it all. Bear with me to the end, and you shall be rewarded, be assured."

"Your pardon, Jack. I am impertinent. Go on."

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#### CHAPTER VIII.—ON BOARD THE WIZARD.

"WHEN I came to the conclusion that by scientifically applying my knowledge to an undeveloped field of enterprise, I saw that a vast fortune awaited me. But I also foresaw difficulties. I was earning little enough, but saving it nearly all. I had stored away two thousand dollars in gold. I could reach the Klondike gold fields of Alaska with that, but I might as well be in the streets of New York. I was not a born adventurer. I could not shoulder a pick and start over the vast mountain crags through the snows of a nine months' winter, living on raw fish and game, hard tack and rum. I have none of the hardy metal in me that tempts a man to do such things, whatever the reward. I am a scientist. He waits for hard hands to uncover, and then supplying brains, he develops the resources of the world. How to get to Alaska was not a troublesome question. How to get there with a ten ton dynamo, a forty horse power engine, and numberless other necessary implements, was another thing. It would require twenty thousand dollars to equip me. There was a kingdom to be had for the asking after that, but twenty thousand dollars was a mountain before which I stood as a pygmy. I was in despair.

"For days and nights I wandered along the wide avenues, pondering upon my scheme of conquest. Late one night in midsummer, moving along among the docks to get a fresh draft of air after a sizzling day, I saw a little boat making for the pier on which I stood beside a young man who

had just stepped from a carriage and had signaled to a steam yacht which lay in midstream. The men in the little craft began quarreling, a blow was struck, and to my consternation the boat was capsized and the three men were plunged into the water. It was but a moment's work to throw off my outer garments, plunge in, and drag one of the men, who could not swim, upon the bottom of the overturned boat, drifting with the tide toward the dock. There kindly hands rescued us, the others already having swum ashore.

"The stranger from the carriage was no less grateful for the simple act than the man whom I rescued, and asked me to go aboard the yacht with him. I assented, glad to find a place where I could dry my clothes, and pleased to be taken up by one whom I somehow realized would be of service to me in my great project. The moment I caught a glimpse of the man's face, I fairly shouted, 'Ben Darrell!'

"The yachtsman drew an astonished breath, and turned upon me. 'I am sorry to say that I do not know you, sir, however much I wish I did after the service you have rendered——'

"'Hold!' said I. 'Do you remember a friend of your boyhood, Jack Marks——'

"'Good heavens!' he exclaimed in mingled amazement and joy, seizing my hand with both his own. 'What circumstance of Providence brought us together? It's a miracle, sir; nothing less than a miracle. Come below, and you shall own the ship, old comrade, own it as long as you remain aboard of her.' And with every protestation of renewed affection we passed down the gangway into the luxurious cabin.

"Everything was ordered for my comfort, my clothes being taken below to the boiler room to dry, while I sat in one of Ben's pajamas, sipping old port and nibbling wafers, talking over old days, for his father and my own had spent two years together in the State legislature, and had had many dealings together with adjoining offices in Temple Court, and neighborly houses just off Madison Square. I recalled Ben's history. He was the Honorable Joshua Darrell's only son and heir, and on the death of his father came into three million dollars, half of which disappeared into the pockets of scheming lawyers and capitalists, the rest going into Ben's dissipation. It was two o'clock in the morning when I got the truth. Ben was on the verge of financial collapse. He had sold his stable and his house, and now the last thing to which he clung with the tenacity of a drowning man—his yacht—was about to be given up to this exacting Moloch of pleasure. I pitied the fellow, for he seemed to me, after the first burst of enthusiasm at the meeting, to be an entirely changed being; and I was the only one on earth to whom he felt that he could go now with the secret of his impending downfall. Need I say, my dear, that with all the enthusiasm of my nature, all the logic at my command, all the persuasion of a buoyant and confident heart, I laid before Darrell the grand scheme by which not only his, but my own, fortune could be restored, and opulence forever secured to us."

"How remarkable that you should meet again in that way!" exclaimed Millie. "It seems like a stroke of destiny."

"Ah, I cannot tell you how miraculous it all appeared to me when, at daybreak, we two emerged from that cabin changed mortals. Then and there, by the light of the waning moon and the dawn of a new day in our history, Ben Darrell and I clasped hands, and pledged each other to the great undertaking. I was to furnish the engineering skill, the most perfect machineries in the world for extracting the gold by the electrical cyanide process, and he, by mortgaging his yacht for fifty thousand dollars, was to equip the ship to the last detail. Then, with twenty picked men, we should round the Horn and cruise up to Alaska, returning only when we had filled the hold of our little craft with a ton of the precious metal for ballast.

"Yes, Millie, I left that ship a changed man. Everything took on a new hue and coloring now. I saw success before me. I resigned my position, took my little store of gold aboard the Wizard, unbeknown to my best friend, secreting it there in my own quarters. It should be the last cork buoy, as it were, thrown to a sinking fortune. Well, I need not weary you with details. Fully equipped and manned, the Wizard left port in February, so that we might sail lazily down to and around the Horn in the early spring, striking north, and reaching Alaska by midsummer. The vessel was splendidly furnished, our dynamos were the most powerful obtainable, we had double supplies of everything necessary. We could illuminate the ship as light as day during the lonely voyage, or flash a search light forty miles at sea. Never did an enterprise start out with greater prospects of success; and yet, Millie, let me surprise you now by telling you a very sad truth: we never reached Alaska."

"What!" cried the listener breathlessly. "Never reached your destination?"

"No. We went through such an experience as no man ever suffered before, I am sure, and such as no man will ever go through again. It thrills me to recall it; for believe me, dear, when I tell you that I am now upon the threshold of one of the most astonishing chapters in the adventures of man."

The young bride was silent. Though it was so dark that she could scarcely see the outlines of the face bent towards her, could catch here and there only a gesture, the recital of these life chronicles at that dead hour of night, with the low sighing winds and the monotonous beating of the sea against the slime hooded rocks, had something of the awesome in it. She did not ask Jack to continue—merely took his hand in both her own, with a silent encouragement.

"After rounding the Horn, as may be imagined, the whole crew were spurred up to delighted energy. We had passed the dangerous cape with wonderful ease for such a small craft of but six hundred tons burden; and when our prow was turned toward the polar star, there was a cheer and an improvised banquet, at which every man sat at table with the captain and his right hand adventurer. As we would be likely to need provisions, and possibly coal, before reaching the west coast of our own country, we planned to veer to the westward, touching some of the lower archipelagoes. By this we would avoid the dangerous coast route, keeping in open sea until

we had reached the shelter of the Tuamotu Islands in the very heart of the South Pacific.

"That early April sail was something to be remembered. For days at a time we plowed through a sea of wonderful quiescence. It seemed almost a sacrilege for human beings to shatter that perfect sweep of limpidity. This part of our voyage was glorious beyond expression; and little did it herald the perils, the struggles, and tragedies yet to come!

"We reached the lowest island of the archipelago series after a twenty days' sail from the Cape, and the sight of land brought all hands on deck at the break of day to give the scene a rousing salute. For three days we steamed to the northwest toward the Society Islands in order to find coal and provisions, for though we had enough of both probably to suffice till we reached the Sandwich Islands, some three thousand miles or more due north, we did not know when the exigencies of the monsoon season would require us to seek quiet waters till the storms were passed.

"In fact, this latter condition of affairs dawned upon us with startling precipitancy. I shall never forget the sight of that monster cloud of blue black with its moulted white edge, which stole up from the southwest like winged demons, gaining on us at terrific speed. Though all before us and about us was serenity and peace itself, Ben, the skipper, and myself instantly considered it expedient to put on full steam ahead and make for the shelter of the nearest island. The orders were given, and the horizon scanned for the most likely haven of refuge. Two points of black stood at the far northeast rim of the sea; and knowing that we were flying from the tempest in making for that distant port, we headed the Wizard in that direction, doubling her speed, though at a cost of five times her ordinary coal consumption. It was an exciting chase.

"Long before the haven was reached, the storm broke over us. It was something sublimely terrible. From a mirror reflecting the gulls so perfectly that the lovely white birds seemed like winged ghosts flitting along the water's edge, the sea was changed into a milk white mass, churned, whipped and lashed, tossed and torn as by the wrath of ten million fiends armed with lightning scourges. For an hour the little ship creaked and groaned under this frightful cudgeling of the elements; then we gained the northeast shelter of what proved to be a very commodious island, slipping into one of its little bays which seemed to be an ideal shelter for our yacht.

"The next day, when the tempest had subsided, attracted by the loveliness of the semi tropic verdure, as well as interested in the strange beings who had come from every part of the island, it seemed, to stare at the wonderful little craft with its smoking chimney, we resolved to make a little halt, and going ashore, feel the pleasant thrill of terra firma once more beneath our feet. Before we had quite resolved who was to go and who to remain on watch, however, a canoe put forth, manned by five savages wearing some insignia of distinction about their brows. In the stern sat some grandiose individual whom we took to be a dignitary. We had plenty of time to study them very carefully from the ship's deck ere they arrived, and we decided finally that their mission was altogether peaceful.

"And so it proved. A young savage of perhaps twenty years of age, oiled from head to foot so that he fairly shone, came aboard with a message. He spoke English with a certain jerky crudeness, suiting every word with a gesture. He was one of the council of the savage king of Yataha, whose hospitality we were at present craving, and the potentate of the island begged of us the privilege to come aboard and see the first vessel moving by fire which had ever honored his shores.

"Naturally we were highly amused, and desirous of seeing what sort of a sovereign this South Sea king might be, we gladly acquiesced, not without first assuring ourselves that all our arms and ammunition were in perfect readiness.

"He came, and if I had ever hitherto entertained the notion that a savage sovereign was a miserable, undersized, and cowardly cur, this illusion was quickly dispelled by the presence of a splendid type of barbaric warrior. He might have done service in a drama of the early German mythology, so majestic, calm, and wise was he in that sort of native wisdom which seems greater than all the learning of books. In contrast with his interpreter and himself were the members of his suite, who looked every inch the savage as their sovereign looked every jot the leader. They were cowering, crawling, treacherous eyed whelps, in whose hands I would no more trust my life unarmed than in a den of tigers without a broadsword. But the king was very gracious in his rude way, and seemed so astonished at everything, that it was a pleasure to show him about. He was formally ushered into the superb cabin, and for the first time in his life he touched to his lips the sparkling champagne of civilization, and found it—well, decidedly to his barbaric taste.

"The king and his interpreter were then shown about the ship, the engines, boilers, and all the other mechanisms mystifying them mightily; indeed, inspiring in their hearts a sort of vague fear as if we were the gods of another planet descended upon them to prove what glories awaited the faithful after the duties of this life. The interpreter did his best, but only succeeded in putting the swarthy potentate into a mental muddle every time he attempted to explain something which he himself could not understand. It was not until the part of the ship set aside for my own uses, and filled with every conceivable adjunct of the laboratory, was reached that the savage king ran against things so supernatural that they inspired in his mind a species of terror. The manner in which I lighted the whole apartment to dazzling brightness by the touch of a switch button simply filled him with such awe of the supernatural that he said in all seriousness to his interpreter, 'That' is the Thunder God himself!' and fled to the deck in fear and trembling.

"A little later the king and his suite took their departure, leaving behind the beautiful skin of a catamount as a token of gratitude and respect. We also received a general invitation to go ashore to inspect the native villages and become the guests of the king.

"That night the ship was illuminated with electric lamps from the great dynamos, and the search light thrown here and there over the island, the

hundreds of savages along the shore falling on their knees in shrieking worship before this apparently celestial spectacle. The king told them that the Thunder God had arrived during the storm, and that this was his lightning eye which he was casting about over the islands and the sea. I verily believe that he convinced himself of these things; for, if the interpreter spoke the truth, and appearances were justifiable, he was assured that the Wizard and all her crew came from the skies.

"The next morning five men, including Captain Darrell, went ashore and were received in state. They took presents with them, including, strangely enough, a magnum of champagne in a silver plated pail packed with artificial ice, which we made on the ship. The crew returned in high spirits, reporting that it was the most highly entertaining diversion of their lives.

"It was like stepping behind the scenes of a South Sea comic opera," said Darrell with shrieks of laughter. 'You should have seen his majesty when I brought out the wine and the iridescent glasses! Talk of the nectar of the gods. I wonder what they thought champagne was. From the seraphic expression of the king's countenance, I am sure he believed it a sort of holy water especially imported from the celestial fountains. He is coming aboard tomorrow to bring propitiatory presents to the Thunder God so that he will stop tearing down their mud and thatched hovels with tempests during the monsoon.' And with a merry wink toward the genius of the laboratory, he went to quarters. It was on this second visit of the king to the yacht that the opening shot of adversity came upon us. From that moment dates all our subsequent perils, tragedy, and sorrow.

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#### CHAPTER IX.—A PRACTICAL JOKE WITH TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES.

"We had a young man on board whose name was Joe Ellis, and he was a case. As a second mate, which was his rank, and a seaman, which was his trade, he was merely fair to middling; but as a humorist he was something distinctive and rich as well as inexhaustible. How my friend Darrell ever came to employ such a man on so serious a mission I cannot account for save on the score of the captain's fits of despondency which recurred now and then, and were the worst sieges of heart sickness that I ever saw a human being experience. Darrell seemed afraid to be alone when these fits came upon him; for life then hung upon so slender a thread that I am sure he would have plunged into the sea on the slightest provocation, if he did not take the precaution to go below and lock himself in his cabin. The man who had run every gamut of sensual pleasure, and who found the emptiness of it all, and with his tastes for the simpler and sweeter joys of life vitiated by the satiety of the *blasé* millionaire, now upon the very brink of bankruptcy found it impossible to live with the demon of his other self. I could see these fits coming on, for Darrell would take oftener to the little wine chest than was needed to keep up his normal spirits; and then it was that we all exercised our ingenuity to keep him amused. One man sang passably, and played the mandolin wonderfully well, and on deck of a lovely evening

would go through his whole repertoire of jolly Parisian *café chantant* songs, Spanish love ditties, and Southern plantation melodies, while the crew off duty would join in the chorus. Often I took Darrell to my laboratory and there interested him in some abstruse scientific problem or dazzling experiment. But the only man who could lift the poor chap from his slough of despond when he was hopelessly bad was Joe Ellis.

"Although Joe broke all discipline at these times, and threatened to unsettle the little monarchy of a perfectly regulated ship, everybody knew that the end justified the means. The awful cloud before the fine features of the man whom all honored and respected so much could not long resist the exorcism of Joe's pranks and wit. He was the ship's jester, and a merry one, too. He would go into perfect paroxysms of fun, like a man convulsed with a passion which made him another being for the time, insane on pure fun. This was all well enough now and then; but Joe played one prank which ultimately led to the tragedy which I recall with shuddering.

"Bright and early on that warm spring morning the king of Yataha came in his royal canoe, manned by a score of brilliantly girdled natives paddling in unison to the measure of a barbaric song. I don't exactly know why, but I somehow felt apprehensive about them, and scanned the king's crew very carefully to discover whether or not they were armed. Seeing nothing to excite my alarm, I said nothing to Darrell, who was all smiles at the gangway, ready to receive the distinguished guest, who had loaded another canoe with skins and trophies scoured from the whole island, and doubtless from many others adjoining, all of which were to be laid at the feet of the Thunder God.

"In honor of the event I had arranged a new electrical experiment on deck—a giant magnet which, with a light voltage, was capable of lifting a huge weight. When the savage king arrived, he was conducted to a seat at the head of the main deck, his chiefs, of whom there were no less than a hundred, clustering in a semicircle about their sovereign. I confess that when I came on deck, after putting everything in readiness, and found here assembled more than three times as many men as our crew could boast, though I saw that not one of the savages was armed, I feared the numbers, and gave instant orders that no more should be allowed on board. I also screwed the hose to the hot water pipes forward, ready for an emergency, and stealthily unlocked the armory, so that in case of trouble there might be no delays. I had also an arrangement of my own by which I could turn a switch pin and send two thousand volts of electricity through a stream of water from the pumps; and such a blast would mow down an army. Wherever that stream struck the human body, it meant instant electrocution. I cannot divine now why I was so fearful of trouble. Nothing could have been gayer than the decks, the crew, as well as the captain, seated beside the king, in the highest spirits. Champagne had been brought, and the glasses were sipped by the barbarians in amazement, and passed from hand to hand; and then the canoe load of rare skins and dyes and precious stones in the rough were spread out upon the deck. After that it came to my turn to amuse the guests.



"Ordering the big magnet brought from below, and suspended from the boom above the deck, I attached two wires from the dynamo, and ordered the deck strewn with marlin spikes and bits of metal rubbish. Then with a little hokus pokus, which was a joke mistaken for reality, I touched the switch. Naturally there was a flight of metal rubbish through the air, all clinging to the giant magnet suspended above, and the savages were aghast with wonder. Releasing the switch, the shower fell to the decks again, and then I managed to get the king himself to turn the switch, which caused the upward shower of missiles. To say that his majesty was awe struck little expresses it. If I had said that I was an emissary from the planet Jupiter, which blazed in the heavens so brightly by night, he would not have doubted. Then I hitched a rope to a steel pick, persuading twenty men, including the king, to attempt to drag the pick from the magnet by their combined force. Of course it was impossible; when, releasing the current, I withdrew it with one hand with greatest ease. A number of these experiments were tried, each one seemingly more wonderful than the last to the barbaric mind, till they were thoroughly hypnotized; then partaking of a few more refreshments the savages prepared to go, first giving us an invitation to come on shore that night and witness a fire dance in honor of the Thunder God's condescensions. We expressed a willingness to accept, and then I went below to shut off the current from the big dynamo.

"I must have been longer about it than need be, for I had no more than put my hand to the lever than I heard such shrieks and groans that my heart leaped into my throat. I don't know why I did not immediately rush on deck. I was paralyzed with fear, I suppose. It was some moments before I could recover my presence of mind, and then it was too late, for, instantly I heard what I realized was a pitched battle between the crew and the savages. 'My God!' I cried. 'The long expected has happened at last!'

"Bolting the door of my laboratory, I ran through the gloom forward, making my way up through the manhole into the fore-castle. From that little citadel I saw the whole bloody field of battle, and gathered moreover in an instant the cause of the trouble. Joe Ellis had tried one of his practical jokes, and the inevitable was the result. He had attached one wire from the dynamo to a twenty foot length of cable, persuading a dozen of the savages to hold it while they stood on the damp deck, and then switched on the murderous current. Of course down went the men in a coiling, writhing mass; some were instantly killed, all knocked unconscious with the ponderous voltage; and as is natural with the savage, the joker was attacked and felled to the decks. That was a signal for the crew to draw weapons and make an onslaught to the rescue of their comrade; and for the savages, two to one against them, with shrieks and insane terrors to rush in turn upon the armed seamen. The blows, the pistol shots, the shrieks and groans rent the very heavens; and from my point of vantage I saw the big king, stiff and immovable with terror, enraged, yet filled with untold bitterness, trying his best to shield poor Captain Darrell, who was shrieking like mad to stop this awful warfare. Suddenly a mammoth chief, with a sail knife

snatched from the belt of a sailor he had struck insensible, leaped upon my captain and plunged the blade into his heart.

"For a moment after this tragedy I am sure that I lost complete consciousness. An agonizing sickness came over me, I melted to the bare floor of the forecastle, like one expiring from a wound in the vitals. The maddening shrieks of the savages increased. 'Wo sangha, wo sangha!'—'The Thunder God, the Thunder God!' I heard them screaming as they tore up and down the deck; and I am sure that if it had been compulsory for me to rise up and defend myself with arms at that moment, rather than attempt so useless a thing, I would have thrown my weapon into the sea and bared my bosom to the knife.

"I foresaw all in a lightning flash. There was not a man among my comrades who would be spared. The poor captain was lying on the deck, the sailor's knife still in his heart, his spotless suit of white now crimsoned with his own blood and that of his comrades. Thus had fallen my own life hopes and fortunes in the twinkling of an eye. I saw no escape from certain and horrible death. I think I might even have put a bullet into my own brain had I heard the brutes coming to make way with me by torture. Then all at once I thought of the hot water hose, which, by a turn of the switch board, would be charged with the death dealing voltage. The sudden loophole of escape from a horrible end seemed to pour a strengthening balm into my bosom. Noiselessly I rolled over and slid through the manhole again, and down into my laboratory, where, seizing the lever, I felt the current throbbing through all its fibers. The engine was still working, thank God, and I felt that if I could only reach the coil of hose attached to the hot water pipes forward, I could stand one man against a thousand with such a weapon.

"Fortunately they had not burst in the door of my laboratory as yet, which was accounted for by the admonitions of the king, who feared me, and knew not what might happen if they ravaged my mysterious den. I heard them prying open every closet and door and chest, shrieking like mad meanwhile, drunken on success and savagery. I crept back through the manhole into the forecastle, glancing down the blood drenched decks where lay my comrades as they had fallen, even those who had leaped up from the engine room below to the reinforcement of their friends lying dead at the gangway.

"Silently I unlocked the door of the forecastle, crept out and around it. Thank Heaven, I was unseen! I reached the coil of hose, turned on the hot water, snatched for the deadly switch, when suddenly a giant grip was upon me. Falling back, nearly choked into insensibility, I opened my eyes. A dozen savages were above me, each brandishing a crimson smeared weapon, the king himself half lying over my prostrate form, imploring, beseeching, even threatening his chiefs in his efforts to spare me.

"'Wo sangha!' he cried. 'It is the Thunder God. Spare him, or he will call down all the gods in revenge. Spare him, spare him!'

"It required all the force and ingenuity of their sovereign to restrain these blood maddened maniacs; but he finally succeeded. Hardly sure that I was still alive after this frightful ordeal on the very brink of death, I was

bound hand and foot, and carried down the decks where my comrades lay in the contortions of the last agony. How I survived that shock I can never tell. We never know the limitation of human endurance till put to the test, and then it appears miraculous.

"Assembled there before the chiefs, the interpreter was called, and I was told that my life had been spared, but on one condition. Weakly I begged them to name it. I was told that I must kneel there in the blood of my comrades and swear eternal allegiance to the king of Yataha.

"Faintly I expressed my willingness, and arose to my knees, bowing before the barbaric sovereign, and taking the oath of allegiance with a score of weapons over my head. Then I was told to kiss the blood drenched feet of the savage; but this token of submission was too much for me. I fell forward on my face in a swoon.

"I must have remained a long time unconscious; for when I came to I was on land, still bound, but in a hovel which I immediately understood to be the king's palace. There were several guards about, and close upon me, clustering with eagerness, were at least a score of women, some of them quite young, all of them moved to savage pity in my behalf. I was in the sovereign's household, and these were his majesty's wives and daughters.

"I do not know why, but even the compassion and interest of these swarthy brutes were sweet to me after that dread hour's calamities; and I returned their ministrations to my comfort with such poor thanks as a man under such conditions may express to people of a different clime and race. Through the mouth of the great hovel, which was hung with tapestries of marvelous design, I looked out upon the sea. There in the quiet bay lay my beloved ship at anchor, surrounded with hundreds of canoes, everything of value, and many things of no value whatever to them, being torn from the yacht and thrown into the canoes, the bodies of my comrades being tossed into the ocean. On shore, as fast as the laden canoes arrived, there was such a pandemonium as no man ever heard on earth before, I am sure; and over the white sands of the beach were flung the trophies of that short battle in mad confusion. Then the night closed in and shut the sad spectacle from my sight.

"As had been arranged, the fire-dance was on. It was planned for the benefit of my poor comrades and myself; but only one survivor of that gallant crew was there to witness it, and he against his will. Maddened with delight over the taking of the ship, drunken on the intoxicants which had been ravished from the wine chests, the mad orgie of that fire dance is something that I shall never forget. The sky was serene above, the night still with the very hush of death, the sea calm, and the soul of nature apparently in profoundest slumber; but in terrible contrast to all this was the riotous dance of fire which was more like the dance of death. Never saw I anything so grandly barbaric, so hideous, so removed from the things of the earth earthy. I seemed to have dropped upon a planet afar, made prisoner, and there witnessing such an amazing spectacle as no earthling before me had ever seen. About midnight, thoroughly overcome with exhaustion, half insane through suffering, I fell into a sort of slumber from

which I was awakened by the king himself. He was alone, and I was alone, the palace, or whatsoever it might be called which sheltered me, having been deserted by the terrified women who had fled, fearing the violence of the men in their drunken fury.

"The king drew a knife, and I thought, from his savage and inflamed manner, that he was going to make way with me then and there; but instead, he cut the bonds that held my feet, then snatching me up, with his arm of steel about me, he plunged with me into the darkness. He was no more than just in time to save me, for instantly his palace was filled with the demons bent on destroying the last survivor of the ship.

"On and on through the Stygian night the sovereign led me; and although I saw that he was very drunk, he had retained his self control, and was as strong as a giant. Into the jungle we dashed, and finally he left me in a safe ambush. What he said I could not gather, for his language was of course an enigma, and his gestures I could not see through the solid gloom. It required no prophet, however, to divine his motives; and somehow I expressed a simple gratitude, thought I felt it not.

"Very early in the morning the king came himself and led me back to the palace. I could have slipped away very easily in the night, though I would have perished in the jungles. If I had made my way to the shore and swam back to the ship, nothing but death would have awaited me for my pains; so, worn and despairing, caring not whether I lived or died, I fell into a half swooning slumber.

"I knew that the sovereign had some object in rescuing me, finding me perhaps of use to him in the management of his people. Whether he thought me merely a mortal now, or a thunder god, indeed I had no means of knowing. He treated me with extreme kindness, even suffering me a little liberty about the palace under guard, and allowed the women of his abundant household to minister to my comforts, binding up my wounds of the flesh and otherwise healing those of the spirit. I was pleased to see that among the wreckage which was brought ashore there was nothing which I recognized as coming from my laboratory; and either that part of the ship had been overlooked or else the order had gone forth that the implements of the Thunder God were sacred, and to touch them might bring disaster upon the whole region.

"The rest of the ship was looted in a shocking way, however; and I was treated to the ludicrous spectacle of the island chiefs promenading about with single legs of the captain's white trousers which had suffered division at the hands of the allotter of the spoil; while over the shoulders perhaps would be worn huge pieces of tapestry or upholstery torn from the saloon of the yacht. Of course, after the provisions were gone and the liquors disposed of, the rest of the spoil was useless to the savages, and was stored away in their hovels probably as souvenirs.

"My life for the following weeks was one of unmitigated boredom. True, I was given food from the royal larder; but on one of my refined, or at least decent taste, this sun baked bread and half cooked fish palled to such a degree that life became unendurable. Then came a most terrible season of

heat and drought. The semi tropical sun began literally to wither up the whole island. The chiefs were called together in council in the king's palace, and it was decided that I had the power of propitiating the gods and bending them to my will. I was told that I was given till the new moon to deliver them from this pestilence which was drying up herb and fruit and making life unbearable ; and that, in the event of my failure, I was to be put to death.

"When the new moon came, and still no rain, I certainly expected that preparations would immediately be made for the carrying out of the propitiatory sacrifice. Again my friend the king came to my rescue. But he gave me to understand that it would be impossible to restrain his people if I did not instantly order rain, which, allowing the time for it to come from the region of the gods, should be here before another moon. But another moon came, and indeed passed into the wane, and yet no rain. Then the islanders were in despair.

"It was close on to November now. The rain which should have come and saved them from a hard winter would now arrive too late to do any great amount of good. The king could no longer restrain his people. They seemed to think that all the ills which had come upon them were precipitated with my advent. They prepared the sacrifice. I was to die as I had seen them make sacrifices to their gods before—impaled on pikes which were first dipped in pitch, then roasted before the altars of the island deities. Naturally I did not relish this prospect ; and, in order to gain time, went into a mock trance, during which I was supposed to hold converse with the celestial powers. The result of this confab I immediately communicated to the council seated in judgment. It was to the effect that, if my life was spared until another moon, there would be a ransom sent from the heavens to secure my release, and enough gold would fall to earth to enable them to send men to far distant islands and buy enough, and more than enough, provisions for the winter soon coming.

"To this some assented, but the majority being skeptical, were for despatching me then and there. It was only the eloquence of the sovereign which gave me again this one chance for life. I verily believe that he was afraid the island and all within its green embrace would sink into the sea if he did not respond to my appeal for delay. But firmly convinced now that escape was impossible, I wished to gain this time for two reasons. First, because of the probability of meteoric showers on the twenty seventh day of the month, at which time I might prevail upon them to believe that the gods were raining down English sovereigns upon them, trusting to fortune to accomplish my escape during the heavenly spectacle and while they were hunting for the gold ; and second, should I fail to lead them into that belief, I could conspire with the king to give me a chance to make away with myself in a manner more humane than the one which the savages had arranged.

"The season when there might be a possibility of a ship coming within hailing distance of the island was now past. I saw nothing before me but an appalling winter, and probably starvation even if I were spared from the

sacrifice. I prepared everything for a speedy exit in case my ruse failed, but as fortune would have it matters turned out more than favorable for me, and in a manner most unexpected and providential.

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CHAPTER X.—AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY.

"THE eventful night of the twenty seventh of November came. Never shall I forget it. Nature seemed to be propitious, and the forbearance of the natives something which I had not experienced before at their hands. They scoured the island for delicacies for my regalement; they brought me the leavings of such canned goods taken from the ship as they could not themselves enjoy, and had withheld from me all this time. The women of the king's household were particularly gracious. I was treated as a prince of the skies, soon to depart from their midst, perhaps in a cloud of fire!

"And yet, I saw beneath all this kindness the gloved hand of cruelty and savage vengeance. Somehow, with my destiny just beyond, with another step likely to launch me into the great eternal, there revived within me a desire to live. Before this I had been indifferent, even eager for the end, seeing no opportunity of escape back to civilization before the winter set in, and knowing that I could not survive that awful season. But strange to say, now I was seized with a mad wish to save myself. I suppose it was on account of the removal of the events which cast such a gloom over me, and moreover my regained normal health and strength. I resolved, therefore, if there was no meteoric display granted me by high heaven on this eventful night, to let the king into the secret of my laboratory, where I had secreted the sum of fifteen hundred dollars in American gold. Failing in that, I was ready to take my life in to my hands against the horde.

"But never was there such a display of splendor and glory within the recorded knowledge of man. From a time before midnight till an hour afterward there was such a brilliant shower of meteors that I was almost as amazed as the savages themselves. I told them that the gods were showering the gold upon the earth for my ransom, and that they had but to await the break of day to go forth through the jungles beyond the cliffs and pick up the pieces where they had fallen. Believing this with a childlike simplicity, more than half the assembled chiefs fell upon their faces before the celestial pyrotechnics, the others remaining stolid, preferring to see the coin in hand.

"I pleaded for the privilege of feeling the shackles fall from my limbs, and the good king did what he could to persuade the council to my wish; but the majority was against us. It was while we were thus assembled on the green before the barbarian village that the sky, the hills, the sea, and the up turned faces of men were suddenly illuminated by a meteor of such proportions and brilliancy that I must confess I fell back half stunned with the amazing spectacle.

The aerolite seemed to burst out of the clear blue ether far to the westward of the zenith, sailing along in the direction of the little island at what appeared to be an easy speed in somewhat of a zigzag motion. The heart of the meteorite

was an intense purple, the nebulae of a brilliant yellow, and for what seemed a thousand miles in the rear trailed a serpent length of blue smoke, spangled with glittering stars. Its downward course towards us lasted but a few seconds, when apparently not more than a thousand feet above us, in mid air, the splendid visitant burst with a tremendous report that seemed to shake the earth, and a million small meteors from the parent mass flashed across the heavens in every direction, burning themselves out with glorious effulgence, and the very heart itself, molten purple with its coronal of golden light, plunged into the sea with a shrieking sound not twenty feet from land.

"For a long time after the coming of this glorious stranger from the heavens, there was not a sound throughout all the void of night. Even nature, the birds and beasts as well as man himself, had been struck dumb by this thunderous cumbiad. At last I rose to my feet, and with uplifted hands implored of the savage council if it were possible, after what they had seen, to disbelieve longer in the divine origin of their captive Thunder God. The interpreter turned my plea into the barbarian vernacular, and then there came such a shout as fairly rent the heavens. Hundreds now pressed near; and while the air was filled with a sulphurous smoke, of a strange and pungent odor I had never known before, they knelt before me, the king taking upon himself the task of unbinding my shackles. 'Yonder,' said I, pointing to the place where the meteorite had fallen, 'you will find ransom for a thousand thunder gods. There is enough gold there to make every man a king, and the king himself as rich and powerful as a god!' With that I walked abroad alone and unguarded, pacing down the beach deep in thought, experiencing for the first time in all these months a delicious sense of freedom.

"At least five hundred savages leaped into the sea where they thought the treasure from heaven had fallen. I laughed heartily, for I knew that the meteorite would never be found; and if it were, it would be so heavy as to defy their combined efforts at dislodgment. For a week, at least, I was reasonably safe. Perhaps within that time some loophole of escape would open to me.

"But little did I calculate on the facts. Within two days, with great shouts, a huge, knotty mass of metal, weighing no less than half a ton, I should say, was rolled upon the sandy beach.

"I must confess that I ill concealed my amazement at this discovery, and it did not the least help my cause in the eyes of the wise ones, who, though they had granted me liberty, still had me within their grasp. I accounted for the fact that the meteorite did not sink deeper into the earth beneath the water because below the sandy top layer of the ocean bed near the shores there was a solid coral formation, as resistless as rock. But now I come to the greatest surprise of all. When, with much ado, the savage chiefs washed the ransom of the Thunder God with clean water, lo and behold it was of a light, rich golden color, like a mammoth nugget of the precious metal freshly mined from the earth.

"I must confess that my own amazement upon the discovery that what I had palmed off as a gold nugget now appeared to prove one in reality was

even greater than the wonder of the natives. 'Can it be possible,' thought I, 'that this is in reality a solid lump of gold?' I thought up all I had read in the past of meteorites and other strange visitants from the heavens; but I remembered not one that showed a particle of the precious metal. I approached the thing with something akin to awe. It looked as if the gold had been lately spread on, and yet it enveloped the whole mass. On removing the treasure to the palace of the king, I awaited a suitable opportunity, and then made a critical examination. With a sharp blade I scratched the surface. I found the layer of yellow metal, whatever that metal might be, was only of the thickness of the finest sheet of gold leaf. I was in a quandary. What was the composition of the meteorite? What was the nature of the fine layer of gleaming yellow which enveloped its knotty surface, and penetrated its myriad open cavities?

"The query in my mind grew to be something insupportable. All night I pondered upon the problem, and the next evening, with an axe, I managed to strike off a ten pound projection, stealing with it down to one of the little canoes and making my way toward the yacht, which had kept its faithful watch for me through all.

"I must say that I shared the repulsion which the natives felt for the Wizard; only, while they regarded it with a species of superstitious dread, I felt that to go aboard of her and recall the scenes which I had witnessed there would be more than I could bear. However, with this new problem before me, I dispelled all gloomy forebodings; and with rushlights and arms, at dead of night, I paddled by stealth over to the ship, climbing into her bow from the bowsprit chain.

"As my feet touched the decks the moon peeped from behind some clouds, the first that we had seen in a long time, and a strange thrill shot through me. With a rushlight in one hand, my revolver in the other, more as a comfort than a protector against foes where my better reason told me there were none, I advanced to the fore-castle, glancing with a shudder here and there, feeling that I must hear the agonized cries of my comrades from the dark shadows and the interminable wreckage along the bleak decks. With a sigh of relief, panting and trembling in every fiber, I opened the manhole, and dropped into the profound silence of my precious laboratory.

"It was as if I had left it only the day before. It had not been once invaded by the barbarians, being regarded as something profoundly mysterious. The king had entered it with me, and having seen that there was apparently nothing there save the strange implements whose wonders had driven him shuddering from the den, he had doubtless enjoined his followers to spare the little workshop of the Thunder God.

"The first thing I did was to unlock my secret chest and thrust my hand in among the round, cool, comforting masses of gold—the savings of many years. Then I settled down to the business in hand.

"Lighting my assaying lamps, and arranging my tools, I drew forth the strange lump which seemed to throb on my bosom. It was the work of but a half hour to put the surface of this chip of the meteorite to every test known to science, and it stood them all.



"The outer coating of that heavenly stranger was gold—virgin gold of such purity and fineness as I had never yet seen!

"I fell back in my chair perfectly dazed. 'Gold, gold, gold!' I cried. 'Where did it come from? Was it put there by man? Impossible. Was it laid out in the fathomless recesses of air? No. Was it drawn from the interior of the meteorite by some mysterious affinity—some electrical force such as meteors are known to possess? Impossible. Where, then, did that great mass gather up its coating of pure metal? Naturally in the sea. But how was it possible? Was there a mysterious gold lode beneath the white sands? No; I had sounded it in my lonely walks, and found it of coral formation—the last place on earth where nature would store away the gleaming ore. I was baffled, staggered, and overwhelmed; but I woke from this condition of wonder with a new resolve. I should remain there and solve the problem if it took the remainder of my life, if it cost me years of peril and privation.

"I speedily forgot everything else. The past seemed to be no more to me. The ancient enchantment of gold over my weak nature was once more renewed, and with tenfold intensity. I forgot the dangers at hand from the natives, I gave no more heed to the ghosts of my beloved comrades as they might have walked abroad over the haunted ship. Alone there at dead of night I fell to my task, for I saw in the solving of this problem the greatest achievement of modern times. If nature gave up her gold to a meteorite, she did so for a reason, and from a storehouse vast and measureless. Where was that treasury, and what was the bribe? I should find it, and then win her over to my cause with those blandishments of science which have so often wrested her precious secrets from her heart of hearts.

"Day broke over my solitary researches, and with it came new alarms. It was soon discovered that the Thunder God had taken refuge on the Wizard, and when, after noon passed, and I did not return, there was a commission sent for me. These emissaries of the barbarian king did not come aboard, for they feared even to approach the strange craft, particularly with the Thunder God presiding there, and enjoined me from a safe distance to lose no time in coming back, with the admonishment that I remained there at my peril.

"To these eutreaties I replied with mild rebukes, and then went below to count up my assets. I found the ship in a most frightful state. True, the engines and general machinery had escaped the vengeance of the madmen, but as for the rest it was in a terrible condition. There was absolutely nothing left there that could sustain human life. My own laboratory and adjoining apartments were not violated, however, and there I had stored away little delicacies which were meant to cheer me on some lonely march over the ice bound steeps of Alaska—a lane, alas, I was never to see. By turning my retorts into condensers, however, and making the most of every jot of food, I could possibly live in comfort for a week. I knew that it would require all that time to analyze the constituents of the meteorite, without which I could hope to do nothing. I wished, therefore, that the savages would give me these few days of grace, and to make quite sure I constructed a strong

battery, brought out a powerful induction coil, connecting it with a strand of cable, which, under cover of darkness, I festooned about the edge of the vessel, where it would be the first thing seized upon by any one attempting to board the yacht. As the ship's complete armory was on shore, this expedient was of more value to me than a gatling gun. To shock them with a new sensation would inspire their terror. To kill one or more of their number would lead to measures of revenge.

"I had plunged well into my work when a second commission, with their interpreter, paid me a visit, with a demand to leave the ship forthwith or an attack would be made upon my fortress. I told the foremost of the chiefs that if their king would come to see me, I would make plain something of the utmost importance to him. The reply was that, inasmuch as there had been no gold found through the jungles from the shower from Heaven, and the nugget was ascertained to be gold only on the surface, I was evidently not what I professed to be. I must therefore deliver myself up instantly, or suffer the onslaught which was sure to follow.

"I replied that all gold was not yellow, but only took that color in the coinage, and if they would only make gold pieces of the nugget which they took from the sea they should find it pure gold. I told them that I had myself broken off a piece of the mass and made it into coin; and tossing a couple of double eagles into the canoe as a proof, I instructed them to bring the nugget to me, declaring that I would instantly convert it into sovereigns in the presence of their king.

"They seemed greatly elated, and took the gold pieces which I had flung to them, gloating and chuckling over them with ecstasy. I think that there might have been a deal consummated had not an unfortunate incident turned the tide of affairs late that evening.

"But during that eventful day I made the most important discovery of my life. I found that the composition of the meteorite was pure olivine!

"You cannot understand what this meant to me until I tell you that most meteorites are composed of magnetic iron, with a succession of metals in lesser proportion, with only a very small amount of that lava metal known as olivine. Olivine was one of the few metals which I had not tested in order to discover a perfect cathode for the gathering of gold in the cyanide solution. Therefore, making this solution with a moderate percentage of gold, and with one wire from my battery to a zinc anode and the other wire to the olivine cathode submerged in the solution, I was amazed and enchanted beyond words to discover that the cathode took up the gold in the liquid compound with amazing rapidity.

"If, then, the olivine cathode worked so marvelously on a small scale, what would be the result with the whole meteorite made into a cathode, and with a three thousand volt current from the great dynamo? Naturally, that I would make gold more easily taken from the tailings of the mines than was ever possible before, and the rewards would be great accordingly.

"With my brain on fire at having been the first man on earth to discover an absolutely perfect cathode for the gathering of gold, I strolled on deck to get the air. It was about dusk. I saw from the shore the emissaries of

the king returning to the ship. I trembled lest they might be bearing the monster metecrite, for to lose it now would mean all to me. But, to my relief, they came only on a mission of conference, expressing the sovereign's pleasure at my ability to coin the meteor into something which was without doubt the genuine article. What plans and projects they had to lay before me I shall never know; for, just at that moment, the tide bore the canoe with its seven men against the ship's side, and instinctively they all made a grab at the cable which hung there within reach. Of course, once having seized the highly electrified strand, it was impossible for them to let go. They shrieked and struggled there while I ran down to shut off the current; and on my return I found the whole commission struggling in the water, the canoe having overturned, four of the savages who had taken the shock being so consumed with terror that they had fainted, and, falling into the water, had drowned.

"This unfortunate episode I saw ended matters completely, so far as friendly negotiations were concerned. I could never convince the chiefs that I had not killed their comrades, but that it was sheer fright and terror upon receiving a new sensation. As I expected, when the bodies of the men were washed ashore, there was a great commotion, and an instant rallying to arms. On the morrow everything would be ended one way or another. The savage natures, long repressed, would now break forth in paroxysms of fury and vengeance.

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#### CHAPTER XI.—A NEW FACTOR IN THE PROBLEM.

"ALL that night I paced the deck of the Wizard. I had written a full account of my discovery for the benefit of future scientists. I felt convinced of having made a profound incursion into the secrets of nature. Meantime, along the shore the barbarians, with torches and gleaming weapons, were anathematizing the Thunder God, vowing to make an onslaught upon him and avenge his wanton murder of their chiefs. At last, knowing that they would wait till daybreak before attacking the ship, I went back to my den below decks and prepared the final message to the world, sealing it in a bottle and throwing it overboard. Then I settled down for a few hours of communion and preparation for what I firmly believed would be my last day on earth.

"Taking up the piece of olivine with a sort of caressing fondness, I was soon lost in reverie. What a strange respite from a torturing death was the coming of that skyward visitant! It had given me but a short lease of life, but for even that I was duly grateful. Then I fell to wondering again how it was possible for the meteorite to become coated with gold in the sea, and suddenly my whole inner being became illuminated with a sort of inspired revelation. I ransacked my memory, and recalled how some years since a scientist, one Selwyn, discovered that sea water contained one grain of gold, or thereabouts, to every ton of the brine. Little as this seemed to be, when the enormous volume of the ocean was considered, with a hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold in every cubic mile of brine, and untold millions of

cubic miles, the combined wealth of gold would buy England and all her dependencies at twice their value. That mass of precious ore would build New York City again of solid gold from the Battery to Harlem!

"I sat spellbound before this scientific truth. How did it get there? Sonstadt had told me that it came from the rivers which flowed over exposed veins of gold in Australia, Alaska, California, and elsewhere. That while the rocks which held the gold underwent slow decomposition, the iodine, which is found in large quantities in the sea, and which is one of the known solvents of gold, washing against the exposed seams, took it up grain by grain, and deposited it in the measureless depths of ocean.

"Why, then, was it necessary to go to Alaska and mine the ore when the natural process of nature had accomplished this for man? The ocean was a gold mine of such stupendous proportions that one millionth part of it in the possession of any one man would make him the Croesus of all ages.

"The meteorite, then, it was plain, had taken the coating of gold from the sea. But how?

"All meteors are magnetic. They become highly charged by their passage through the two hundred or more miles of atmosphere that surrounds the earth. By the time the meteor struck the sea, it probably attained a high voltage of electricity. The composition being pure olivine, and as olivine was the most perfect cathode in existence so far as man's knowledge went, the electrical affinity gathered far and wide every particle of gold in the sea during a running tide.

"I leaped to my feet, my brain in a whirl. If, then, by natural means the olivine gathered the gold from the sea by the aid of its electrical charge, what prevented my securing the meteorite, and by immersing it in the sea, with the powerful voltage of my dynamo, repeating the process, and gathering gold from the ocean?

"I was now convinced that my life was spared for a purpose. I was seized with an inordinate desire to live. I felt that with this great door of nature ready to yield to my key, I had a right to live. I began to plan a stratagem on the savages. They would come at daybreak. I must appease them, since to fight was useless. I must cast over my last gold piece to bribe them to be quiet. I could not go down to a miserable end with this secret on my heart, with this gigantic experiment untried. I thought of starting the boilers and the dynamo engines; but I found them in such a condition that it would be useless. I ran the whole gamut of expedients, even planning to leave the ship and steal ashore with my American gold, make my way to the king's hovel, and bribe him to my cause. I looked out over the waters. There was a grayness in the far east, and soon the world would be crimsoned with the first burst of dawn. To get to shore now undiscovered would be impossible. I should be seen and killed with the first sounding of the alarm. The watchers were doubtless ready. To escape to the jungles would mean death at this time of year, even if I avoided the wrath of the barbarians. No, there was nothing to do but remain aboard and take the brunt of battle.

"Again and again I went on deck, scanning the horizon, then peering

shoreward. A light breeze was blowing. It came from the southeast, the region of storms. My heart leaped. Could it be possible that another typhoon was on its way here? There was a misty veil over all the southern heavens. I knew what it meant. It would blow up so stiffly that the canoes would not venture forth. I never welcomed the coming of a storm with such prayerful delight. I all but fell upon my knees in thankfulness as I saw the sun come up, then grow obscured, and the southern heavens darken like the face of a god in wrath. The savages saw it all, and their hand was stayed. I could see them running hither and thither, gesticulating wildly, each with arms stolen from the ship's armory, leaping into the canoes and out again, all screaming orders and none obeying them.

"At last with a glass I saw the king himself advance to the water's edge. It was evident that in order to save his own life he had resolved no longer to attempt to spare mine. He gave a few directions, planning the attack, then scanned the southern heavens with a sort of simulation of rage. He appeared to be greatly displeased that the execution of the Thunder God was delayed, but I am sure that he was in his heart secretly delighted. I watched them there till my eyes burned and smarted with the strain, then lay back on a coil of rope.

"The wind rose to fury now. When again I looked shoreward, I saw four men in a canoe making for the Wizard, and at least two hundred warriors watching its course, ready to embark if the canoe should reach the lee of the ship without capsizing. I never prayed for the sinking of a vessel in my life as for that miserable craft whose success would be the signal for attack. I even drew with trembling hand a revolver from my belt, prepared to annihilate the crew if they approached within pistol shot; but even while my eye peered along the barrel, there came a tremendous gust of wind and over went the little craft like a chip!

"The shouts and groans from the shore even drowned the shrieking of the winds, but not a man made an attempt to rescue his comrades. Floundering in the water, the savages clung to their muskets and went down, only one having the sense drop his weapon and make for the overturned boat. Paddling for shore, he had no more than reached it when he was cut down by one of the chiefs for not bringing his gun back with him.

"The tempest now grew into a typhoon. The sea, in the shelter of this semicircular inlet, was lashed into foam, and the shore was completely shut from view. The king and his chiefs had gone into refuge, and I myself went below to think out the future, and soon fell into a sound slumber in my chair, rocked by the none too gentle motion of the yacht at anchor. It was late in the afternoon when I awoke, and the storm was subsiding. I felt refreshed and my courage renewed. I went on deck. The shore was again visible, through a sort of yellow mist, with the gale still blowing. Suddenly there arose from beyond a terrific shout, and instantly the beach and the heights beyond were alive with savages dancing and shouting in wild hilarity. I turned to the westward, and was astonished to see a full rigged brigantine driven before the wind into the shelter of the bay, even as we ourselves had been many months before.

"Naturally the sight of something civilized, even though it might prove to be a pirate craft, inspired me with untold joy. As the bark grew nearer, however, I saw that she was in a deplorable condition—indeed, was in a state bordering on collapse. The waves were breaking over her frightfully, and she was sunk so low in the water that I concluded that her hold was more than half filled. Her sails were torn away, the mizzenmast broken off short, and she was all but lost. The men were tossing overboard everything that they could lay their hands on, and the sea about her was a mass of floating cargo. Then she settled by the stern, and the crew scrambled like frightened rats into their boats.

"I watched all this with my glass, my heart beating wildly. They had mistaken the demonstration of the natives to beckonings of safety, for when the crew piled into the two lifeboats they struck straight for the Yataha island. It was a perilous voyage, and more than once it looked as if they would never reach the island. I knew that it would be far better for them if they never did.

"On the way toward shore one of the boats came very near the yacht, and I sounded the alarm with all my might. They certainly could have heard every word, but they seemed indifferent, wild to reach land at any cost. In vain I shrieked out that they were in danger. 'You will be killed instantly! Save yourselves. Come aboard here, as you value your lives,' I cried. But they went on, and I came to the conclusion that none of my warnings, shouted in four different languages, was understood. I therefore left them to their fate.

"It was as I expected. They were welcomed by the women with a friendly demonstration, then immediately set upon by the men, and a fierce encounter ensued. Against such numbers the unarmed sailors could do nothing. They simply went down like cattle, at least half a dozen of them, seeing resistance out of the question, kneeling down and suffering themselves to be bound hand and foot, and carried back to be disposed of later as the council should see fit. The bodies of their poor dead sailor comrades were then thrown into the sea, after having been stripped of everything the savages found to their taste. I watched this sad tragedy with such feelings of rage and such a galling spirit of revenge that I was forced to go below and control myself by sheer force of will. I resolved to rescue these survivors, if there was any human way to attain this miracle.

"The wind now veered, and the wreckage which at first moved toward the sea now came landward with the gale and the tide. There were bales and boxes and hampers of every conceivable variety, and I concluded that the ship was on its way to or from China. The tide bore much of this straight against the Wizard, and with a desire of seeing what vessel the stranger was, and whence she came, I stood by with a hook and tackle, ready to make fast the first object that floated within reach.

"Strange to relate, the very first treasure trove from that ill fated bark was a half barrel of Santa Cruz rum!

"'Here is my salvation!' I cried. Making fast the barrel, I ran with all haste to my laboratory and returned with a blue bottle in my blouse.

Climbing down once more to the cask, I loosened the bung, and into its interior I poured sixteen ounces of chloral hydrate.

" 'There ! ' I cried. ' They want a good strong tippie ; they shall have it. ' Then I set the barrel afloat again, and it took up its shoreward course.

" The gloom of the heavy sky now gave way to the utter darkness of night. Still the savages watched seaward, gathering in the floating wreckage, breaking open the parcels and hampers, dividing the booty with lavish hauds, shrieking like mad with triumph. I sat on a coil of rope and waited till the discovery of the barrel, and about nine o'clock in the evening I became aware of its landing, for there was unusual activity on the part of the men, who ran to their several hovels with all haste for all kinds of receptacles.

" The opportune arrival of the king saved the liquor from being wasted. I saw him take a big draft of the concoction himself, and finding it good, he appointed four cup bearers to pass out the grog, each man to have his proportion. . It evidently lasted longer than he thought, for I saw the same procession of men pass twice, and even thrice, before the cask which was presided over by rushlights on the beach ; and then the dance began.

" It was even a more barbaric spectacle than that I had witnessed after the wanton vandalism of the Wizard's wine closet. I soon noted that the action of rum was giving way to the more potent influences of the drug. I knew that I had concocted the libation with enough to put to sleep for at least two days an army of the strongest constitutions. Up and down the beach they tore and shrieked like maniacs, till, as before, the women becoming frightened, had gathered themselves in groups, and finally slunk away into the darkness of the jungles.

" The king witnessed one mortal combat between his maniacal subjects ; then, as a safeguard, he ordered the arms gathered together and deposited where there might be no danger of a wholesale slaughter following the midnight debauch ; but his precautions were scarcely necessary. One by one the young men and the chiefs staggered shrieking over the green, then fell into heaps, struggling and murmuring in mad frenzy. At last, after many hours of revelry, the final shout of laughter rent the air ; and arming myself to the teeth, I slipped down into my canoe and paddled to the silent shore.

" The white sand was strewn with the wreckage of the brigantine, dotted with the blood of the slain sailors, and here and there in stony slumber lay the savages in sprawling heaps. In the flaring gleams of the rushlights I saw these frightful shapes, then made my way towards the king's palace.

" I had not gone far when groans brought me to the side of seven men, two of them wounded, but all bound hand and foot. They were the sailors of the brigantine which was now at the bottom of the placid bay. It was a marvel that in the frenzy of the drugged rum they escaped assassination ; but the chloral had done its work too speedily. Instantly I unbound the captives, imploring them in every language at my command to remain silent. With every show of surprised joy and unutterable gratitude, the men leaped to their feet, relieving their comrades till all were unbound. Then I discovered why these sailors had not heard me as I had shouted to them from the decks of the Wizard. To a man they were deaf and dumb.

"Reduced to signs and motions, I ordered the two wounded men to be carried down to the lifeboat which still clung to the shore, and then returning to the palace, we found his majesty lying on his face over his own threshold. He was unconscious, the drug having taken effect before he could seek the shelter of his home. Binding him securely, we carried him to the other lifeboat, then returned for the council of six—the head chiefs of the king's realm and our deadliest enemies. We found them, one by one; and it was with the utmost persuasion, and even threats, that I prevented the sailors from stamping out the lives of these savages in revenge for their comrades' murder; but assuring them that it would be far more to our interest to make them prisoners, they spared the brutes, carrying them to the boats.

"Arriving safely on board the *Wizard*, we deposited the seven prisoners there, well bound, leaving one man to stand guard under arms. The two wounded sailors were cared for as well as possible, then the lifeboats were taken back to shore. First, the arms which had been taken from the savages and secreted in the palace by the king were hunted up and placed aboard a boat, even to the last saber; then a search was made for the missing meteorite. In this last precious hunt we were baffled.

"Morning broke, and with it returned the women by the hundreds. When they saw the havoc that the drugged rum had caused, there was consternation, breaking here and there into lamentations. But when they discovered their king and six principal chiefs, including the interpreter, made prisoners, their shrieks rent the heavens. In vain they tried to wake their warriors into a realization of the calamity that had befallen them. All day long the struggle went on, but the drug baffled them.

"It was not until the morning of the second day that the savages came out of their trances, and a more abandoned and miserable crew of bipeds it would be impossible to imagine. Slowly they comprehended their predicament, and as the chiefs came to—among the first his majesty himself—they were separated and tied here and there in different parts of the ship. When the islanders realized fully the condition of affairs, a wiser sentiment began to prevail. The interpreter was unbound, and under cover of weapons, was told to communicate the will of the new crew of the *Wizard* to the riotous islanders. They were told that the king and his council were prisoners, and that every particle of the booty taken from the yacht, as well as from the brigantine, must be brought aboard the *Wizard*; that one hostile movement on the part of the islanders would be instantly answered by a general slaughter of the king and his council. With this message one of the sailors, more daring than the rest, rowed the interpreter ashore.

"Fortunately the announcement was received with dogged cowardice and the attitude of whipped dogs. The islanders realized that they escaped death by a miracle, and that the salvation of their chiefs depended upon their faithful fulfilment of the conditions of the latter's release. Sullenly at first, but finally with great alacrity, the savages began the hunt for the booty.

"Load after load of every conceivable kind of plunder, some of value,



some perfectly useless, was emptied from the hovels of the savages, until it was reported that the last vestige of the wreckage was restored. Still we persisted, and as often as we did so, threatening the chiefs with death, the boats would come back with new spoils. Last of all to be given up was the ammunition from the armory, at which point we concluded that they had scoured the island and done their best to ransom their chiefs. One or two were then released to encourage the natives, and then the demands were renewed. The meteorite was the next ransom, and it was a long time forthcoming. It had evidently been hidden; but after long hours of anxious delay, for I had feared that the nugget of olivine had been cast back into the sea, I saw with my glass a score of men bearing the heavy burden down to the boat. The taking of that precious load to the ship was something that kept me on the rack, and the natives as well; for I had threatened to annihilate the captives instantaneously if by any mishap the nugget fell overboard. It was with a sigh of relief that I saw the ropes bound around the precious meteorite at last, and the word given to hoist it into its haven of safety.

"Now, feeling quite sure of everything, we let the chiefs free, but still held the king himself prisoner while we began the restoration of the ship. It was fortunate we took this precaution, for we had scores of favors to ask before we could possibly make the Wizard habitable again. His majesty was treated with extreme kindness, yet he chafed under captivity, being in constant fear of execution. He implored his ally, the interpreter, to enjoin his people to grant our every request and so save his life, as he thought that revenge was as keenly alive in the civilized as in the savage breast.

"It was fully two months before the Wizard was restored to seagoing condition; but as my deaf mute sailors, whose lives I had saved, and who answered my every beck and nod with the gravest servility, were men of intelligence, I had no trouble in giving each man a position on the ship according to his talents.

"The two wounded sailors proved to be the most valuable assistants, after they had been restored by the aid of my medicine chest and my zealous if impracticable skill. I felt now that the life of every man was like that of a brother, of untold value to me. I made one of the men chief engineer, and the other his assistant; and worthy of the posts they proved.

"Fortunately the excessive drought for the many months the yacht lay in the bay had the effect of preserving the machinery from rust; and when once she was put into condition, she was quite her old self again. As a final ransom we ordered the Wizard's hold filled with wood from the jungles of the island, so there might be no doubts of our having fuel enough to reach the Society Islands, some six hundred miles distant, where we intended to winter, proceeding southward and home in the late spring. I meant, in case my experiments proved successful, not to attempt the Alaska trip at all.

It was a gala day when at last the king of Yataha was granted the freedom he so little deserved. He had grown ten years older in the few months' captivity. He was servilely obsequious to me at the last, and frankly told me that death was the penalty he knew was his due. Then,

amid shouts and execrations from the populace, the sea chariot of the Thunder God steamed out of the little bay, taking a course easterly by north toward more genial surroundings.

"In the shelter of a more auspicious island some weeks later, I took up the grand experiments. During this strange voyage on the silent ship, ceaseless in my watching over the novel crew, I had ample time to arrange matters, so that when the first stop was made I set to work without any of those delays which usually baffle the explorer for new secrets in nature's arcanum.

"My first labor was the casting of the olivine into a series of plates to be used as cathodes for the great dynamo. This was a most trying task, particularly as I had not the most convenient implements at hand; and I found that when heated beyond the fusing point the olivine lost sadly in volume. This work being successfully accomplished, the olivine plates were affixed to teakwood beams, something more than two feet apart, the whole series making a cathode no less than forty feet square. This, properly wired, suspended from the stern of the ship, submerged to a depth of twenty feet.

"The zinc anodes, on something of the same principle, I had less difficulty in making, being thoroughly acquainted with the workings of that metal; and that negative pole, properly wired, I suspended from the ship's bow. Then I started the great dynamo, and waited.

"In all my experiments my faithful men did my bidding without the slightest hesitation. What they thought me, I little know. They certainly entertained toward me a feeling of awe akin to that which the savages of the Yataha Island entertained for the Thunder God. I think they believed me to be some mad scientist with more money than wits. I paid them in gold at the end of each month, keeping up their spirits and their loyalty toward me. Without them I was handicapped indeed.

"Night and day we poured that terrible voltage of electric current through the ocean from stem to stern, anchored fore and aft in such a manner that the tides, passing in and out twice a day, and the natural South Sea current, running eighteen miles an hour, shot between the electrodes under the ship, separated thus at a distance of one hundred and forty feet, no less than twenty tons of sea brine per second. For three days the high voltage current was kept up, and then the wonder working cathode was lifted from the water.

"With that breathless interest did I await the first gleam from the clear depths, counting the clicks of the capstau with my very heart beats. One—two—three—four—five! A moment more and I should know whether I was to be one of the foremost discoverers of the age, or merely a madcap, bankrupt dreamer.

"At last! Never shall I forget the first warm glistening of those gold laid cathodes as they beamed there in the early light. How the sight thrilled me! I gave a leap, and all the men stood about me, staring. They had not an idea what I had accomplished, but I had fired them with my own enthusiasm. I shook them one and all by the hand; I shouted, sang, and gave thanks in such a frenzy of delight that I am sure they believed me insane.

Then I detached one of the olivine plates, and ran with it to my laboratory.

"The single plate proved up five ounces of virgin gold. According to that, our labor had netted us nearly three thousand dollars a day. The olivine cathode was doing with ease all I had claimed for it. We remained in one spot till we had taken a million dollars' worth of gold from the sea, then moved on to the vicinity of Australia.

"It was here that the greatest amount of gold was found, owing to the rich quality of the ore in the rivers which empty into the sea after having traversed the Australian gold regions, the percentage being nearly two grains of gold to the ton of sea water. Our cathode often enriched us here at the rate of five thousand dollars a day, depending on the state of the sea and swiftness of the tides and currents. We worked with great secrecy, not alone in fear of piracy, but convinced that if the truth could be known, and olivine discovered, it would be but a question of time when gold would be taken from the sea in such quantities as to bring its value down below that of the baser metals, compelling an instant change in the currency standards of the world—a calamity the gravity of which it would be impossible to calculate.

"Is it so strange, then, that within four years after my departure from the metropolis I turned up again with a goodly store? Or was it odd that in seeking investment for my burdensome treasure I should have gone into Wall Street, to be soon seized with the inevitable madness, with the inevitable result?

"But, thank God, for all my disasters in the Street, for all my disillusion of financial life, there was one sweet consolation. I met and loved at first sight the dearest little woman on God's green earth."

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## CHAPTER XII.—AN UNEXPECTED SEQUEL.

"HARK—hush, Jack! What was that?"

Absorbed as she was by the moving narrative of the man at her side, Millie, nevertheless, thought she heard afar over the silent waters an ominous sound.

Marks turned abruptly, his eyes bent upon the ocean with a searching glance. "Come!" he said, with a slight tremor in his voice, leaping up and seizing his companion by the hand. Hurriedly they passed down over the yielding sand dunes toward the shore.

"What is it, Jack?" she queried, in faint whispers.

"The ship—the mysterious ship," was the calm answer. "It will soon be here now."

"What! The Wizard? Is it possible that you have signaled the Wizard?"

"Watch—yonder!" came the quick reply.

Suddenly three small flashes of colored lights gleamed along the wave, then Marks dropped to his knees in the sand, performing what seemed to be a weird sort of incantation. The result was three flashes of scarlet flame from flash powder laid upon the flat of the rock.

Millie stood still, quite dazed now to confront at last the reality of all this amazing narrative, which bore the semblance of a dream in spite of her efforts to rouse herself into a realization of its positive truth.

Thrice the signals came, each time nearer and nearer, as often repeated from the strand.

"Thank God! They are safe. I know from that signal that all is well on board—that all my strange apprehensions which have so long haunted me are groundless. Now for a new life! Millie, we shall secure this treasure here on shore, then in the propitious Wizard be off for the South Seas, to return only when the most fabulous wealth on earth is ours; then we shall bury the precious olivine cathode in forty fathoms of ocean, and keep the secret till another generation. Ah, does not life seem worth living again? Ho! Again they are signaling. I must answer."

Marks bent down in the damp sand, his eyes on the water, but suddenly he uttered a sharp cry. "Distress!" he moaned. "That is the signal of distress. Great heavens! Something has happened——"

Suddenly, and without any sign of warning, there flashed from the turrets of some strange and gigantic Goliath nearly a mile to the southeast a terrible ray of light, arrow tipped as with living fire, of such power and brilliancy that, as it poured its concentrated volume through the solid night, it bathed the mysterious ship, advancing shoreward so stealthily, from stem to stern in a white coronal of glory. Bullets it might have escaped with ease in the night, but that awful eye from the behemoth's decks there was no avoiding.

Marks was quivering in every respect. He was speechless.

"What is it, Jack?" cried the astonished woman, appalled and suddenly frozen to the heart by the strange spectacle.

"A cruiser," moaned Marks.

"A what, Jack?"

"A cruiser—a government sea hound. Oh, the scoundrels; they have tracked me at last——"

"Who—who?"

"Those gutter rats of Wall Street whom I gave a scourging yesterday. Ah, Millie, this is the end of ends, I fear. They have set the government's Cerberus upon us, believing that I am in league with some gigantic combination of pirate ships——"

But the hard sentence was never finished. "Boom! boom!" thundered the cruiser's guns over the black waste like a voice of cruel judgment.

They could see both shots zip through the sheet of solid white flame that bathed the mysterious ship from the cruiser's search light.

The first shot crossed her bows; but the second—ill fated blow of destiny!—seemed to swerve from its course, crashing through the Wizard at the water line just forward of the forecastle.

Marks sank in his tracks with a deep moan, his head bowed down in his encircling arms. He could not bear to see what was to follow—what soon did follow.

There was a desperate scramble on both ships' decks now. On the

cruiser they were wild to capture the mysterious ship before she sank, on the stricken craft the seamen were taking to the boats to save themselves from imminent death.

For only a moment did the little game fighter struggle as if trying to rally even in the death throes, then she pitched forward and went down like a sounding lead.

"They have murdered her!" cried Marks in the agony of his heart. It is the end of ends, Millie. We are lost—everything, everything!"

Millie half fell beside her husband on the slime mantled rocks, clasping her comforting arms about his neck, whispering something which broke with a sob. The calamity seemed too great for utterance.

Suddenly the stricken man rose and turned his face from the sea whither he no longer had the courage to look, plodding on back toward their little ambush. "Well, Millie," he said with a despairing sigh, "Heaven has still left to us a little of the treasure—somewhat of the reward for courage and strength in adversity. Come; let us go back and guard it, lest these monsters in the flesh, having robbed us of the greater wealth, now despoil us of the lesser."

Arm in arm, Millie clinging to her husband without speaking, the pair made their way back into the thick undergrowth.

Suddenly there was heard a low alarm, like one on guard giving a signal to his allies in hiding there, and the heart of John Marks gave a leap.

He understood it all on the instant. Snatching two revolvers from his belt, he started on a quick pace toward the buried treasure, resolved to fire mercilessly upon the first stir of a living form, to shoot to kill now in order to protect this last floating spar of a sinking fortune.

There was a scurrying of feet, then an open fusillade of bullets, rapid, fierce, and deadly.

Millie, overwhelmed with terror, dropped to the ground like stone.

The firing lasted some moments, Mark advancing and emptying one weapon after another till he stood beside the uncovered but still safe treasure, steadying himself triumphantly there, weak from loss of blood from a bullet wound in the shoulder.

With limbs all but turned to chalk, Millie made her terrified way forward through the thick gloom. "Jack, Jack!" she called, as if she expected to hear no answer to her appeal save a death rattle. "Jack, are you hurt?"

"Fear nothing," came the confident encouragement. "It is all over, and we have saved our own, thank Heaven!"

Millie came forward, seizing her husband in her frenzy of joy.

"Look!" said Marks.

"Where?"

"Yonder!" The man was pointing to a strange coil of inanimate shapelessness sprawled at full length face downward in the sand.

"What is it?" she queried with a gasp.

"It is 'the little man in black'—the hound your father set upon me, and who then turned traitor to him at the last. He is dead. And yonder, mortally wounded, if I may judge, for my aim is sure——"

"Who—who?" cried the breathless woman.

"His highness, Prince von Marlane!"

For a long time there was no sound. Millie was struck to ice. The veins seemed to flow chill quicksilver through her panting bosom.

"So ends it all, Millie. But stay; you must find something to bind over this wound. I believe I am hurt rather badly——"

"You—hurt?" cried the young wife, leaping up, all devotion, compassion, and heroism now.

"In the shoulder. It is only a flesh wound, but it bleeds, and I am weak. Get some leaves, quick; then tear your skirt to shreds and bind it up. We shall sit here and watch till daybreak."

And while the faithful bride was snatching down the boughs about her, she heard him murmur:

"But it is all safe, Millie; it is all just as I left it. A little moment more and we should have been as penniless as the curbstone gods on Wall Street yesterday after their overturning in the gutters. With this we shall go forth and begin life anew. Shall we not, my love?"

*Charles Edward Burns.*

THE END.

### KNOW'ST THOU THE LAND?

Know'st thou the land where sky blue flowers  
Grow six feet high from the scarlet ground,  
And twist themselves into impossible bowers,  
With whirligig leaves around?

Thither, oh, thither, love, let us fly  
'Neath jet black trees and a pea green sky!  
For I cannot rest till my feet shall stand  
In the nightmare garden of Poster Land.

Know'st thou the land where a giant girl,  
With a vacant face and solid hair,  
With garments of many a serpentine twirl,  
Stands on the amber air?

Thither, oh, thither, love, let us fly!  
For I long to meet her before I die,  
And see if my soul can understand  
The mystical maiden of Poster Land.

*Marion Couthouy Smith.*

## THE LAST WAGER.

A crisis in the affairs of the Carson family—The desperate appeal made by a distracted mother—An episode in a mining town of the West.

"TWELVE years," sighed the woman; "twelve years of toiling and struggling, and now you are sweeping away the earnings of that long, hard time——"

"Be quiet, will you?" interrupted the man, as he lolled over the bare table. "I earned the money; you've nothing to do with the disposing of it."

"I've nothing to do with it? Great heavens! Who toiled by your side all those years, worked in the claim day after day, washing and ironing for the miners by night, so that we might pay off the debts? Look at those hands;" and she stretched them out, red and rough, in the lemon light of the oil lamp. "Look at them. Thirteen years ago they were soft and white, the hands of an Eastern schoolgirl. Then you came along. Great heavens, what would I not give to wipe out all those years since then! What would I not do to be back where I stood that night I took up with you—to stand free to choose all over again!" She covered her pale, drawn face with the toil reddened hands and groaned.

"I guess if you were free to choose you'd do the same thing over," gruffly retorted the man. "You had restless blood in you, and it was bound to show itself. You were not satisfied with the sameness of the life in Milltown; you were eager for change; you thought the West would be broader, and I was a Westerner. You were ready to fly from home rule, and were only too glad to get away. You did no more than other women have done—jumped from the frying pan into the fire—and now you are always crying about it."

"No, I am not always crying over it, Fred, but tonight I cannot keep in; it is the last straw. I thought you were gambling heavy, but was not sure. Now I know. After all these years of toil, that you should wager all your savings—let them fly away from you into the pockets of that stranger. You know what he is—every one knows what he is—a vampire that sucks men's lives away, the lives of their children, and then, I suppose, he laughs over it. Why should I not cry? How many years have I dreamed that my boy would be able to attend school in the East; get out of this hotbed until he was man enough to know what to do. You know how I saved in hopes he would be able to go home to grandfather this fall; you know what store I set by the plan, and now—now there is nothing left but the shanty and the claim. I cannot help the lad now. I cannot work as once I did. I cannot and will not take in washing again. I am not strong enough, and even if I was, what would be the use? I know where the hard earned dollars would go——"

"Woman, be still!" shouted the man, bringing his fist down hard upon the pine table.

"I will not be still. I have been still long enough, and now I will have my words."

The rude door creaked and a childish form appeared in the opening. His light, curly hair was brushed back from a pale forehead, where the blue veins showed at the temples. His large, blue eyes looked their fear, as they glanced askance at the corner where his surly father sat. With embarrassment, he noticed his mother's haggard, tearful face, and not daring to meet her eyes, or the hard ones of his father, the child stretched himself out before the leaping fire on the hearth, and nervously began to stroke the fur of the lean, old cat.

"Get up out of that," called the man, sighting the boy. "Get up and bring in more wood. It's like a lord she's raising you—go!" and he kicked one foot angrily in the direction of the fire.

The boy crept swiftly away and made toward the lean-to. Great tears dropped from his eyes upon the woodpile. As he sat on the chopping block, the cat, who had followed him, brushed against the patched knees and purred sympathetically.

"Pussy's sorry," sobbed the boy. "Pussy's so sorry for little Joe and his mother! Does pussy wish he could go away with mother and little Joe—back East, where dear mother came from—where she lived when she was young and pretty like the picture on the mantel; where mother never had to do washing, where father never was drunk nor cross?"

The cat rubbed back and forth, giving his answer, as he brushed the straight standing tail against the boy's face.

"Oh, pussy," he gurgled, half laughing, half crying, "you want to make me laugh! You don't believe in crying, do you, puss? I guess you're right. I don't know as it does any good. But mother is crying;" and again he broke into gurgling sobs.

When the child had slunk from the room, Anne Carson turned upon her husband. It seemed that all the spunk in her composition was alive that night.

"Look here, Fred, you may talk and abuse me as much as you please, but I won't have you talking to the child the way you did just now. He shall not be threatened. He is the best boy on the ridge. He is my child—mine. You can have no claim to him when you take so little interest in him. He is not like you, thank God!"

"I suppose not. You'd rather think he looks like your old flame, Tom Delaney."

The woman turned her face toward the wall; the big tears rolled down the sallow face as she nervously bit her thin lips to keep from sobbing outright. When the sobs were gulped down, she made brave to speak.

"In the name of Heaven, can't you ever let him rest? Do not remind me of the only joy I ever knew outside of my baby, of the one man I truly loved."

Fred leaped to his feet. His face was like a patch of the red fire; the



purple veins stood out on brow and neck like those of an outdone horse. Advancing toward the woman with outstretched fist, as though to strike, he cried :

"You dare stand there and say this to me—that you loved Tom Delaney ! Woman, you dare ?"

She stood facing him, calm and unflinching.

"Yes, even though you were to send me before God this night, I would be glad to go with the words on my lips. Tom was the only man I truly loved ; I love him yet, though I know not whether he is dead or alive ; though I may never see him again this side of death's valley. My boy and the love I had for this man were the only things that made life worth the living. Now, do your worst !"

Before the sublime look that lit up the worn face—the face that had once been counted the prettiest in that old New England town—the man's wild mood grew tame ; his hand dropped slowly to his side.

"So let it be. I don't suppose you got much good out of your love. You are too big a coward for that ! I am not afraid of a dead man, or a live one either, so far as your love goes. But it might have pleased you better if you had not taken up with me, out of spite, because of that little love quarrel you two had before I came along. You gals like to cut off your noses. You might be happy and rusty in musty old Milltown now, if——"

"Hush !" entreated the woman. "It is not for you to discuss my dead past. It was clean when I came to you, it has ever been clean, and I doubt if the good Lord can blame a woman for loving a good man, no matter whether she be married to a wicked one——"

"You're welcome to all you can sneak in that quarter," he retorted, picking up his old hat from under the chair ; then he turned to her, with grim mirth shining in his bloodshot eyes and flickering around his snarling mouth, as he added, "Well, I'm going to try my luck again. I suppose you won't object if I bet the cabin and the claim and—the boy ?"

She shot up from her seat ; her eyes flashed, anger and pain fought in her fleeting expressions, as she faced the man before her.

"You dare—you dare wager my boy, as Trot Jones wagered his, to put him in service for five years ! You dare, and I'll kill you and kill the man before I'd let my boy, my baby, go !"

The man gave a laughing growl, as he banged the door after him. Then poor Anne's courage gave way ; she sank on the floor in a miserable heap, moaning and sobbing, going over and over again every wretched scene in the tragedy that stretched itself over those dozen years past. Seeing his father depart, the boy stole into the living room again. Kneeling on the floor beside his weeping mother, he attempted to raise her to her feet, speaking to her as she might speak to him, weaving out happy dreams, as he tried to soothe her.

"Don't, mother, don't ! Don't cry. I'll fight for you when I grow big. I'll take care of you, mother, and we will have a nice, little house, with roses and honeysuckles all over it, like your old home. We'll go back East, out of this bad land, and I'll make you happy, dear mother, indeed I will——"

But the more the child spoke, the tears wavering in the little voice, the more the woman wept. Then, taking him to her heart, almost squeezing the breath from him, she sobbed herself to calmness. She had fully made up her mind that she must find a way to take the boy and herself from this terrible place. Who knew but that before morning the child would be wagered by his terrible father, bound out for a term of years? She had never seen the gambler, who came to town three weeks before, and who was winning their all; but from the women of the settlement she learned that time and again he had sat down with pockets almost empty, and before he rose from the table had scooped in all his opponents had. They said he was a handsome man, not much over thirty five, but that he seemed cold blooded, and cared not for the wrecks in the homes of those whose earnings he won.

Just before dawn came, forcing its way through the heavy rain storm which swept over the mountains the night before, the door of the cabin burst open, and into the room staggered Fred, coatless, hatless, and with the look of a madman on his face. Anne started up from the bed, where she had thrown herself but a few hours before; she wound her arms defiantly around the boy, for her sleep had been light and full of dreams of the father's treachery. The glare from the fire showed the man's face only too plainly, and the woman started with terror as she saw what was written there.

"It is done," the man muttered half brokenly, as he lurched towards her, then fell back into a chair. "Say, Anne, girl, I have done it—the claim's gone, the shed's gone, and the boy's gone. I wanted to bet *you*, too, but that fool of a Sam said that he would have nothing of that kind in his shanty. Say—Anne——"

For an instant the woman's brain seemed to melt away from her. She sank back on the bed. As the coarse voice again broke the silence, she raised her head, clasped the boy to her heart, then rising up, leaned over him and shook him to consciousness. She had not undressed at all that night, but the boy had been tenderly tucked away, even as the child of the best in the land.

With palsied hands she dressed the drowsy boy. His big blue eyes filled with piteous terror as he blinked over at his half drunken father. "Mother," he whispered against her wet cheek.

"Hush, my baby," she answered. "Come with me—be quick!" Throwing a faded shawl over her hair, and holding tight to the hand of her child, she passed from the cabin out into the wind and rain.

The man who had bartered their all away did not attempt to follow them. He did not care where they were going; he was too drowsy to think of it very seriously. He threw himself before the fire, and after lying there a while, stretched over to the ingle and drew some sticks from the woodpile. He threw the juicy pine on the fire, then fell back on the floor, exhausted by the effort.

Still clasping the boy's hand, Anne hurried over ruts and rocks, beating against the wind and rain, her hair flying in wild confusion about her haggard face. Soon they discerned red lights glaring through the blackness, like the eyes of some wild beast of the forest. They were the

lights of Sam Terry's saloon, and they made straight for them. Standing outside the door, they heard the harsh voices of the miners and the clinking of glasses above the chink, chink, of the chips. Then came a long silence when nothing was heard but the chink, chink ; then nothing at all. The woman took courage from the silence and made brave to enter the room, not knowing that she was intruding at a most inopportune moment, when the players were scanning the result of the last deal, their faces set and grim, as they studied out their luck or ill luck. She pushed in the swinging door. Her shawl fell partly back from the wet hair, which hung in moist masses across the sorrowful eyes. The boy hung back, hiding his face in the shelter of her damp shawl. The thick smoke, the fumes of stale beer, and the nauseating smell of raw whisky filled his soul with sickening terror.

The men lifted their eyes from the cards to look at the woman who had come in upon them in the dingy dawn. The bartender paused in his occupation of filling a tumbler with whisky, his mouth agape at the sight of Fred Carson's wife—for she was not a woman to frequent his place at any hour.

"Your man went home an hour ago," he ventured to say to her, as she stood there like some terrible witness of their revelry. The gamblers looked on Sam in the light of a hero, for none of them had the courage to look straight at the woman, let alone address her. They knew why she was there.

"I know that," she replied. "I want to see—I want to find—Fleming."

"Again the bartender opened his mouth in surprise, and nearly all the men, except Fleming, followed his example.

The man, Fleming, rose and came before her. She caught hold of her child's shoulder, as though leaning on it for courage.

"You—you are Fleming?"

"At your service, Mrs.——"

"Carson," she replied coldly. Then gaining courage, she went on brokenly, then fiercely: "You are the man who won my all—from my husband. He bet all—all—even my child. I came to say that you shall not take my child from me, that if you attempt to press the claim I will shoot you, and every one who aides you, on sight. You are a coward, a coward—to wager gold against the life of a little child—this baby!" She drew the boy out into full view, where the glare of the yellow kerosene lamps fell on his pale, quivering face. He seemed like a sweet intruder from Heaven fallen into hell. The men were ashamed as they saw him; the woman spoke out: "He is my baby—mine—and no one shall take him from me—no one but God!"

The men shuffled their feet nervously about the brown, sandy floor. Fleming looked at the woman and then at the child. He turned, and going over to the table he had just vacated, picked up a pouch, heavy with gold. Then he came back and held it out to her.

"This is yours—take it. Take your child and leave this vile den. I would not take your boy under any circumstances. I but entered into the scheme of the thing for the play. God forgive me!" The men around the tables stared. "Tell your man I give back his claim—tell him he is a

blasted fool! A man with such a wife and such a child! *I* never owed either. *He* should have done better." Then, as though ashamed of having said so much, he turned back to the tables.

"I am sick of the whole business," he exclaimed. "Here, you men, take your money and go home to your families—those of you who have families. You are a lot of thieves—yes, *thieves*, taking what belongs to those whose care you took upon yourselves—those to whom you owe care and shelter."

As his voice rang out on the heavy air, the woman raised her head, as a horse does, hearing the familiar whistle of his master. She seized the boy's hand and almost flew from the shed. Disregarding the sobbing pauts of the breathless child, she tore on, then suddenly fell against a heap of stones at the side of the road. The boy tried to help her up, but in vain. She had fainted. He raised his childish voice and wailed loud and long.

"Why, what's the matter, little man?" said a passerby. "What's happened?"

"It is mother, sir. She's fallen—she's killed, I believe!"

Big Fleming knelt down in the mud; he lifted the woman in his strong arms. In the dim light, he noticed that where the mud stuck fast on her forehead a darker and warmer stream was gushing.

Hastily calling to the child to follow, he strode back to the saloon. A few words to the bartender, and Anne was stretched out on the lounge in the warm, back room. Fleming knelt beside her, washing away the mud and blood, chafing her cold hands. They poured brandy down her throat, and in about half an hour she opened her big, blue eyes.

The bartender had taken the child out into the kitchen; the man Fleming and Anne were alone. He saw her eyes open and leaned over her.

"Anne," he whispered; "Anne, my old sweetheart—my good angel, speak to me!"

"Tom!" she cried. "*Tom!* Oh, this is the worst of all my sorrows! You—you—whom I held to my heart as the one good man, the one bright spot of my dark life—you, now a desperate gambler, one who steals away the earnings of the poor, hardworking fools of the camp; who takes bread from the children's mouths; wrecks the lives of their mothers! Oh, my God! my God! Have you no mercy—could you not spare me *this?*"

"Anne! Anne!" groaned Tom. "Listen! It is not so bad as that. I have not been at this work more than a month. I went into it thoughtlessly. I began to win, to take everything I touched, and the excitement proved a boon to me—a boon to make me forget you! For ten long years I have wandered about the West, working, striking luck. I have plenty of gold. I do not need that of other men, but I went into this excitement to hide the hurt. Oh, Anne! Anne! You cannot know what I have suffered at loss of you!"

"I do know," she sobbed. "I judge by myself."

"Oh, little Anne! My good angel. I will go away from these holes, and I swear to you, as I would swear to the God to whom we sang in the old church at home, that never a card will I touch again. I'll make restitution

for all the loss I have occasioned. I'll be what you would have me. Anne, believe me !”

“ I believe you, Tom,” she answered ; “ with all your faults you never told a lie. Now, go. It was my boy you wagered for the last play—my son, my little angel—the only joy I have. Remember that, Tom. Remember the agony of this night, and for the sake of that pure, old love, be good and brave, and then, in the land of the Lord——” She buried her face in the pillow, and a big sob choked the man's reply.

Without a word, he pressed her hand, then passed out into the splashing rain. He had not been gone three minutes when a messenger ran into the room.

“ Mrs. Carson—Mrs. Carson——” he faltered and hesitated, playing with the rim of his felt hat.

“ What is it? What has happened?” she cried, knowing from his manner that something terrible had occurred.

“ Your cabin was burned to the ground ; your man was in there, probably asleep. We found his charred body near the chimney. He was tipsy when he left here, and we suppose he rolled into the fire or caught a spark from the wood——”

Anne shuddered and hid her face under the cover. Her boy came rushing in, his face horrified with the news he had just learned. The mother clasped him to her breast without a word. She thought of the father, who had wagered him but two hours ago—she thought of his punishment—then at the awfulness of it all she swooned away.

\* \* \* \* \*

June had come to camp before Anne was able to sit up. In those two hard months it was Tom who took care of her ; Tom who kept the boy from growing ill from grief ; Tom who saw that the best the county could afford was brought to the invalid and her little son. If you go to Camp Lawson today, they will tell you all about this wonderful Tom : how he gave back all he had won ; how he exhorted the men to provide for the families they had brought upon themselves ; how he made the women bless him for very thankfulness, tears streaming down their worn faces, as they thought of the changes that came about under his influence.

In July Anne, Tom, and the boy were flying over the plains, eastward. The boy looked up at the man, a strange, heavenly light in the big blue eyes under the mat of yellow curls ; he held tightly the man's hand, and pressed lovingly his mother's.

“ It seems queer,” he said, “ that mother is going home again, back to her roses and honeysuckles. It seems queer that you are now my father. But it is good ; for you will be a good father to me, won't you, father Tom ? ”

The man looked into the child's clear eyes but a moment, then his eyes smiled across to the tender face leaning on the cushion above the boy's golden hair. It was to her, as much as to her son, that he said :

“ So help me, God, I will ! ”

*Catherine Frances Cavanagh.*

## THE PHANTOM ARMY.\*

Being the story of a man and a mystery—How a startling change of environment came to a bankrupt Englishman—From a London garret to the White Hussars of the mountains in Spain and an army whose service is against the world.

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### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

WALKING about two in the morning through a London street, Captain Falconer, late of the British army, and now of a garret in the Marylebone Road, owing to proceedings in the bankrupt court, is startled by a woman's cry for help. His response to this brings him the acquaintance of Isabella de Gavarnie, who comes to him afterwards with a strange commission. As his fortunes cannot well be changed for the worse, he accepts this, together with the purse she tenders him, and with his man Benjamin departs for Zaragoza, in Spain, where he is informed the one to whom he is sent will seek him out. Arrived here, he is accosted by a pretty gipsy girl, Giralda, who bids him meet her at midnight at the prison gate, whence they ride to the prince.

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### CHAPTER VI.—AT THE GATE OF ZARAGOZA.

I RETURNED to the Casa de Arino with swift steps. Zaragoza interested me no more—Zaragoza nor her people. Just as curiosity had been one of the motives which sent me to Spain on an errand as strange as any in history, so now did curiosity compel me to obey the gipsy girl. I said to myself that I would ride with her to the devil if need be. A memory of her laughing eyes and warm lips set me hungering for our next meeting, and for a clue to her identity. More than this, I began to know a certain joy of the whole adventure which I had not imagined possible when I left London. After all, a man does not live in a two pair back in the Marylebone Road; he exists. And it is a platitude to say that poverty chooses her best weapons from the armory of the rich. Until Portugal Street took charge of my affairs, the world had accounted me a lucky man. The months of suffering and neglect and shame which I had lived through made me grateful for those hours of respite in the land of sunshine and of pretty women. I would go through with it to the end, I said—and in my heart I echoed the wish that Giralda, the gipsy, would see me on my way.

Perchance this resolution owed something to the soldier's blood in my veins. The records must be turned back many a page to find the day when a Falconer was not known to the war office. From our birth up, we were taught to believe that arms constituted the only profession of a gentleman. The names of my forefathers are written upon the monuments to the nation's gallant dead. And if one had said to me in my boyhood, that the hour

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would come when I must lay down the sword which my country had put into my hand, and turn with shame from the old way of life, I had called him a liar and struck him in the face. So little could I foresee that day, nor, for a truth, a later day when I should wander in a Spanish town seeking out a gipsy girl who was to lead me—God knew whither or upon what emprise.

Old Benjamin was in the courtyard of the hotel when I returned. He had already shed some tears over my dinner which was spoiled; and was prepared to shed more to welcome me. But I cut him short and left him with a measure of astonishment brimming up and overflowing.

"Benjamin, you have seen the riding coats worn by the swashbucklers in this place of perfumes?"

He smiled in a knowing way. If he had seen them!

"While I am dining, you will go out and buy me one. Get, at the same time, one of those thunder and lightning sashes and a sombrero, Benjamin—large enough to go on the head of a fool. That will just fit me and the business I am going upon. You understand?"

I detected the suggestion of a twinkle in Benjamin's eye. If his thoughts could have been read, I do not doubt that a repartee about the housemaid at 92 would have been mixed up with them.

"I understand, sir," he answered with wonderful civility.

"I am glad to see that the *senoritas* have not yet deprived you of your unusual intelligence, Benjamin. You may now go out and buy the things I speak of. Add to them a cloak which will make me as much of a brigand as color and circumstance will permit. And, by the way, put out my passport and load my pistols."

Benjamin stood stock still with the wine bottle poised in his hand.

"The pistols, sir——"

"Certainly; should I ask you to load my sword? You will charge my pistols and put them out on my bed with my riding breeches and my long boots. I am going for a little trip into the country, Benjamin—Saturday to Monday, cheap return. And since it is possible that I shall not return at all, I am going to give you a hundred pounds with which, failing to trace my body for decent burial, you will make your way back to London. Once there you will go straight to the lady named Gavarnie and tell her what you have done. It is quite clear to you, Benjamin?"

Benjamin poured out the *Manzanilla* with a steady hand.

"Is it clear to you, sir?" he asked presently.

"I'll be hanged if it is, Benjamin."

He put down the bottle and began to sniff at a dish which a dirty fisted waiter had set upon the buffet. I knew what he was saying to himself. He had served a maniac for ten years and might continue in the employment yet a little time.

When dinner was done, and I had smoked a cigarette by the splashing fountain in the courtyard, my mind was fully made up as to the journey—if it was to be a journey—which the gipsy had proposed to me. I determined, at a soldier's whim, to take fortune as she came to me. At the worst, it

would be a flirtation with the prettiest creature I had yet seen in Spain ; at the best, it would be knowledge of the man she called the prince. And to this end, I thought it well not to hire a horse until I had learned at the prison gate of Zaragoza what her promise, that I should ride with her, really meant ; if indeed she had the intention to present herself at the rendezvous at all. That the adventure might be colored with danger to me personally was a premonition which never entered my head. I had good pistols for my holsters ; my muscles were as hard as iron ; I remembered that a society paper once called me a triumph of matter over mind. It would be a bad day, then, when I must shuffle off because a Spanish cutthroat lurked beyond the city walls. Besides, there was my disguise which, I flattered myself, would make me as good a Spaniard as the best of them. Never did man set off to a masquerade with a lighter heart than I to my rendezvous with the gipsy of Zaragoza.

Benjamin returned to the hotel at a quarter to eleven. He carried with him a *samarra* of fine lambskin—this being a short jacket reaching scarce to my hips—and a sombrero of gray felt, edged all about with black velvet, and ornamented, beyond, with gaudy tufts and tassels of silk. For cloak he had purchased a rich *capa* or mantle such as horsemen, or indeed any persons of quality in Spain, are never without. When I had dressed myself and stuck the hat on the side of my head, in the best style of transpontine melodrama, I asked my man, after having thus equipped myself, to express what he thought of me. He answered, "Oh, Lord !" and left the room hurriedly. There is an originality in Benjamin's speech which borders often upon insult.

It was a quarter to twelve when I left the inn, and two minutes before the hour of midnight when I found the gipsy, accompanied by a man who led two horses, at the gate called La Ceneja.

"Senorita, you are punctual," was my greeting to her.

"Senor, I do my duty," she answered simply. "If you are ready we will go now and be in the mountains at dawn."

"Oh, it is to the mountains that we are to ride, then ?"

"I guide you to Torla," she exclaimed quickly ; "after that, the way is your own and you will have no need of me. Be pleased to mount, señor, lest others see us."

I noticed that she was dressed much as when I had seen her by the gate of the cathedral ; but her skirt was shorter for riding and she carried an exquisite whip in the handle of which jewels sparkled. The veil she wore was thicker, so that you could distinguish nothing of her face except the sparkling black eyes which she could use with the ripe art of the coquette. When she sprang upon her horse, it was with the agility of one schooled in all the pursuits of an active life. And this was even more astonishing—that the man who held the horses gave her the civility due to a grand dame.

"God and the Virgin go with señorita," he cried, bowing low ; "and you, señor, may you remain with the saints."

A pious wish ! But it was my thought when I mounted the little bay



horse he held that I would sooner be at the side of Giralda, the gipsy, there upon the road to the mountains, than in company of all the saints that Rome has canonized.

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#### CHAPTER VI.—THE PHANTOM ARMY.

It had been in my mind when we rode out of Zaragoza that I would find an early opportunity by the way to question the gipsy and learn more from her than I had yet learned, either in London or in the Spanish city, of the woman who had sent me to Spain and the man I was to meet there. But we had not ridden a league before it became clear to me that my guide had no intention of thus permitting herself to be questioned, or, indeed, of gratifying my curiosity in any way. Even at the beginning of our journey she forged ahead, aided in her intention by as fine a pony as ever I clapped eyes upon; and she made it plain to me from the start that she knew my purpose, and would have none of it. Beyond that we rode too swiftly to talk. Despite the rough highway and the dust which the wind whirled, our horses were going almost at a gallop from the moment the gate of the city closed behind us until the lights of the little town of Ayerbe came to our view. Nor did she once draw rein until a village clock told us that an hour had passed and that we had numbered some twelve miles as the record of our ride.

We entered Ayerbe almost at a walk; and many a watch dog found tongue at our coming. So hot was the night that the peasants had quitted their houses and lay sleeping upon the grass at the roadside. Far away above the horizon I could see the higher peaks of the frontier mountains, at the foot of which our destination lay. Though I would willingly have changed a word with Giralda, nevertheless my curiosity welcomed her haste, and I rode on glad as a trooper at his first charge. Three months had passed since I had crossed a horse. Love of the old life, the life of the nomad, surged up in my heart irresistibly; the arid plains we traversed were typical of liberty new found in a land that knew nothing of me or of my misfortunes. The past seemed written out forever. The future—I would begin to think of that when a new page was turned.

We rode through the hamlet slowly, meeting none but a watchman, who bawled incessantly, "Sereño," as though the state of the weather was of great consequence to the sleeping souls in the shuttered houses round about. Here again, as at the gate of Zaragoza, my guide appeared to be on the best of terms with the law in the person of this bawling patrol. His greeting to her was the greeting of a servant to a mistress. "The Virgin go with you," *senorita*. Senor, may you remain with God." I threw him a silver piece and left him protesting that all which he had was mine—a present of no great value I make sure. When we had heard the last of him and were out on the high road to France again, I forced my horse to the side of my companion and found her not unwilling to let the poor beasts go at their pleasure.

"Well," said I, and such a picturesque thing she was that I could not take my eyes off her, "is this the way you ride for pleasure?"

She lifted her veil from her face and showed me that the compliment pleased her.

"It was necessary to pass Ayerbe before dawn, señor. Many ride that road to the city, and they are not all the prince's friends. But we are among our own people now. And we shall get other horses at Jaca to carry us into the hills. *Bueno*, there is nothing like a good horse in all the world."

She patted the pretty creature she rode affectionately; and then laughed slyly as though the part she played amused her. But I had made up my mind that she should speak more plainly than she had done hitherto, and of a sudden I seized her bridle rein and brought our horses to a stand.

"Giralda," said I, "we are going to talk a little while and you are going to tell me many things. I have ridden twelve miles with you already without asking you a single question. Is it fair that I should go in this way?"

She simulated great surprise.

"*Ay Dios*, señor—is it I who ask you?"

"Not at all—the question is mine. It is a very simple question, Giralda. Who is Madame de Gavarnie and who is the man to whom she is sending me?"

She did not betray any surprise at the question; her serious eyes told me that she was debating it. For a little while we rode on in the darkness, letting our horses amble as they would. Our way lay upward out of the plain to the picturesque glens of the mountains.

"Come," continued I, "do you deny me such a little favor?"

"I deny you nothing, señor. I am only the servant of the servants. If you would speak of Madame Gavarnie, command me and I will tell you what you wish. She is my friend, and there is no one like her in all Spain. She is your friend too, or you would not be riding with me tonight."

"I understand that; but there are other things I do not understand. Your friend has a home in Spain, you say?"

"She had a home; but the birds build their nests in it now. It was before the war—I am too young to remember that."

"And her relatives—do they not live in Arragon?"

She shook her head.

"They come and go like the snow," she exclaimed earnestly; "today, they are here; tomorrow we do not see them. But we wait always, for when they return our king will come also."

I looked at her closely. In that instant I seemed to read the key to the mystery which had sent me from England.

"Oh," said I, "so you are a little revolutionist, then? And the man to whom you are taking me—does he also wait for the coming of this king?"

"Señor, how shall the king wait for the king? Is he not our lord and master? Will he not save Spain and make her great? You do not know or you would not ask me these things."

I had never heard in all my life a story which astonished me more. Strange as they were, those few words tore the veil from my eyes and showed me the dark road of danger and conspiracy which, in my folly, a woman had found me so willing to enter. A man who would save Spain!

A man spoken of by the peasants as their lord and master ! A man seeking swords for his service ! What child could not have told the rest ? The way before me was no longer hidden in darkness. I saw that it lay straight—the road to the prison or the scaffold. And so suddenly did the truth come to me that I reined in my horse and sat for a long while dazed and helpless as one struck by an unseen enemy.

What course to take, now that I knew all, whether to go on and see this man with my own eyes or to return at once to England and face the woman, was the question which held me to the place ? I could see the girl watching me with anxious eyes ; I could detect her fear lest I should turn and leave her there on the road to the mountains. But that was no hour wherein to be led by a woman's pretty face. I determined on the spot that I would not ride another league unless she could add some good word of explanation to the extraordinary story she had told me.

"Giralda," said I, unconsciously letting the horses go again, "do you know what is going to happen to this king of yours?"

She laughed scornfully.

"To the prince, señor—what is going to happen to him?"

"Call him what you like, king or prince, as you please, they are going to take him to Madrid presently and cut off his head."

Her contempt for this answer was a pretty thing to see. She regarded me as a child who spoke of things yet to be learned.

"Señor," she said, "there is no power in the world which could harm my master."

It was my turn to laugh.

"He is immortal, then?"

"He is sent from God," she answered simply.

"That may be—but God is on the side of the largest battalions. Who can help this man if the Spanish troops seek him in the mountains?"

"Spain will help him, excellency—Spain and his friends, who are to be found in all the cities of the world. *Ay Dios*, he is above all men, greater than all men. The people fall on their knees and worship him when he rides through the mountains. His armies come and go like the wind and the thunder. Today we see them ; tomorrow there is silence in the mountains. His enemies die and their houses crumble to the dust. His friends are richer than kings, and follow him like children. Mother of God, if I were a man, it would be happiness to obey such a master and to die for him!"

I had never thought that a simple girl of the people could betray such passion as this gipsy girl now showed. All the religious ecstasy of the ignorant mountaineer was to be read in her words. Her eyes sparkled as the eyes of a woman at prayer. She clenched her hands and raised them to heaven as though to ask a blessing on him she spoke of. For myself, she had given me the word I asked. Had a gibbet stood upon the road before me, I would have gone on to the end.

"Tell me," said I, "the prince lives at Torla?"

"There is no house in the mountain which is not a home to him."

"But we shall hear of him at Torla?"

"Excellency, we shall hear of him tonight—now, for yonder he has lighted us a lamp."

We had ridden into a deep glen of the mountains ; into a glen bordered by a thick cluster of trees which arched their leaves above us and hid the starlit sky from our eyes. Beyond the glen, and through the vista of leaves, the lower slopes of the Pyrenées were to be seen ; and over those again, the peaks of the mighty mountains which stand sentinels of the frontier. To the hills, forest clad and golden in the moonlight, the gipsy pointed when she said that her master had set up a lamp for us ; and when I looked at them, I saw what she meant. For there, standing upon the very edge of a grassy precipice, was a majestic castle ; and from every one of its lower windows tongues of flame were leaping.

Terrible in the silence of the night was this appalling beacon. Even as we sat spellbound, the rushing fire began to lick the outstanding turrets and to burst up above walls which had defied the centuries. I could hear the shrieks of women and of men ; could see the terrified inhabitants huddled together helpless and awe struck on the terrace of the house. The crackle of the fire, heard above the hush of the forest, was as the roar of a mountain torrent. Soon all the sky was blood red and quivering. We could distinguish the howling of dogs, the ringing of bells, the tramp of feet. Our horses began to plunge and rear so that we drove them out of the glen with difficulty ; and when we stood again in the open, we were not three hundred paces from the burning building and could see the lights of Jaca twinkling on the road before us.

Everywhere now the country was awaking. From the town itself there came a great press of people all running toward the burning chateau. I saw priests directing their followers ; guards upon horseback ; rogues ripe for pillage ; women drawn by curiosity from their beds. Shouting, running, praying to God and the Virgin, the crowd began to approach us. Then, and it was a thing surpassing any wonder of which my companion had spoken, I beheld this great throng fall suddenly upon its knees, and the hush of night fell again upon the mountains.

What miracle had been wrought ? What hand had stayed them ? What vision had they seen ? The questions scarce were uttered when the answer was given to me. High upon the hills above, riding out, in fact, from the gates of the burning chateau, there issued a troop of horsemen, whose white pelisses were opening to the breeze, whose plumes waved like the wings of birds, whose glittering swords shone in the moonlight as swords of gold. One hundred, two hundred, I know not how many—a superb company, their superb habiliments glowing in that strange light as with an ornament of jewels—they rode on headlong, with cries that resounded through the glens of the mountains, in a gallop that was terrifying, irresistible, a thing to thrill the heart. One long minute, I saw them ; I heard the shrill voices of the peasants, I beheld the terror of the guards, the frenzy of the priests. Then the vision passed. The hussars disappeared into the forest. Only the burning castle, with its heart of lurid flame and its crest of sullen smoke, stood up to tell me that these things had been in truth and not in dreams.

The White Hussars passed from our sight, indeed, but the spirit of the night was still upon us. And as I rode, awestruck, at the head of the glen, that spirit filled me with a desire not to be controlled or described.

"The Phantom Army!" I said to myself; "the horsemen of the mountains! I have seen them, then; and by the God above me, I will join them."

#### CHAPTER VIII.—THE GLEN BELOW TORLA.

GIRALDA had not spoken to me from the moment when we first beheld the burning chateau until the last of the white horsemen had disappeared in the hills. The same spirit of awe which possessed me and was not to be resisted, the same delight in that wild scene of daring and of courage, had muted her lips and held her still. She was like a child in an ecstasy of pleasure. And her pleasure remained when the troop had vanished and the frenzied peasants were coming to their senses again.

"Excellency," she cried, turning to me suddenly, "you would wish to go back to Zaragoza now?"

I did not answer her question, but put another.

"The prince you speak of, is this his work?"

I pointed to the chateau and to the wind-blown fire which enveloped it. So fiercely did it burn that embers of wood and glowing ashes fell almost at our horses' feet.

"It is his answer to his enemies," she said quickly. "There have been many beacons in the mountains since the winter; there will be many more when the winter comes again."

"Your friend is an assassin and a brigand, then?"

She pointed to the throng of peasants all huddled together and gibbering on the road before us.

"Excellency," she asked, "do men bow down and worship the assassin and the brigand?"

I had no word for her argument. The strange spectacle I witnessed, the terror of those come out of their beds to see the beacon on the hills, the glittering troop of horsemen, sent all my logic to the wind. Curiosity took possession of me anew. I must see the man who could work these miracles, must speak to him, know him.

"Giralda," I said, "shall we meet the prince at dawn?"

"We have lingered an hour, and must rest at the inn beyond the city. After that it is three leagues, señor. I leave you at the torrent beyond Torla; my work is done; you will see me no more."

She could play the coquette as no woman I have seen before or since. At any other time, a soldier's love of an adventure would have set me scheming to detain her in the hills; but the swift events of the night had put such thoughts from me, and we rode on silently and at a canter. Many of the peasants still sat by the roadside, held there by fear and wonder; the hamlet of Jaca itself was awake and humming with tongues. But we pressed on to the inn at the further side of the town and so found the horses my companion had spoken of. Here, as in Jaca itself, there was no more sleep for

master or for man. The burning of the castle of La Santa Cruz, the coming of the phantom horsemen, gave food to every tongue. Men gathered in little groups to discuss the thing in hushed whispers; the women, half dressed and with disheveled hair, wrung their hands and prayed to the saints. But none had a coherent story; none would speak of him whose hand had kindled the beacon, and whose voice had commanded the horsemen of the night.

In among this chattering, half naked throng Giralda forced her pony. Busy as the landlord was with his flasks of wine—for he had a shrewd eye to the opportunities of the night—his work ceased as soon as he observed us; and I could not fail to mark the deference with which he treated my little companion, and the haste he showed to serve.

"This way, *senorita*—this way, excellency; you will find the horses saddled and bitted. *Dios!* what a night to live! What sights in the hills!"

There was a very cunning look in his eyes when he turned to us in the privacy of the garden behind the inn—a look of one who would say, "We are not as these others, we who know." Giralda ignored him; but I said in my best Spanish:

"The night is well enough, my friend; tomorrow may not be so pleasant. You will be having the hussars from Zaragoza here by and by."

"They will come for the ashes," he chuckled; "they will come to say masses for the dead, excellency. The hussars of Zaragoza! There must be many of those fellows to hunt down him we know. Was it not yesterday that the Count of Jaca refused to come in? Tonight his house is a lamp in the mountains. There will be many lamps yet, *senor*, before the water is in the rivers again."

His loquacity began to run away with him, but Giralda whispered something in his ear; and at that he hurried to the stables with our jaded horses and led others into the garden. On our part, we sat only to drink a flask of wine and eat a dish of fowl, and then were in the saddle again. No reckoning was paid, nor was any demanded. With a low bow and a courtly "At your feet, *senorita*," the *ventero* took his leave of us. And so fresh were our horses, and so willing, that the sun was hardly above the mountains when we sighted the village of Torla, and I knew that the work of the night was almost done.

It was a glorious morning of summer, fresh with caressing winds and music of the birds. We rode in the heart of the mountains, through a mighty forest which had outworn kings and dynasties and the glory of Spain. A thousand changing lights flashed upon the higher peaks about us; the pinnacles of snow were so many glittering spires of crystal and topaz and amethyst. Ever and anon we passed some rushing torrent whose note was a rolling harmony of icy waters tumbling and foaming in channels of stone. The grass which our horses trod gave ripe greens to the eye; the rustling leaves above were as fans held by the hands of elves.

Weary as I was, I had a joy of the new day which no sense of peril yet to be encountered, no memory of the night, could efface. The world awakening gave me a new regard for the little guide, come to me so strangely in a

strange land ; I said that I should be content if she would lead me even to the world's end. For there was sunlight now upon her pretty face ; the shadow of fatigue could not rob her of her girlish beauty ; in all the mountains there was no fairer thing than Giralda. When at last I realized that we had come to the parting of our ways, that henceforth I must ride alone, it seemed to me that I was leaving the one being in all Spain who would remember so much as the name of Noel Falconer.

We were close upon the hamlet of Torla then. A glen struck up the hillside from the valley of forest to the remoter heights above—a glen, dark and solitary and black beneath the shadow of great trees. Here my companion checked her horse and made it clear to me that our journey was done.

"Captain Falconer," she said, speaking to my very great astonishment in English almost as good as my own, "your way lies yonder up the glen. When you see the prince, say nothing of those who brought you and nothing will be asked. Your past is your best introduction. Do not forget that you have come to offer your sword to one whose name will soon be heard in all Europe ; whose armies will save Spain and her people. And when you remember that, forget Giralda, the gipsy."

I could not answer her for the surprise of it. She played the coquette no longer. Young as she was, she wore a dignity of manner which forbade any liberty. I remembered that I had kissed her before the cathedral gate at Zaragoza and flushed like a schoolboy at the remembrance.

"I know not what to say to you—how to thank you," I stammered.

"I need no thanks," she exclaimed ; "those thank me best who serve the fatherland. God guard you, my English friend, in the new life you have chosen."

She gave rein to her horse and galloped off into the forest. I saw her for a moment upon the edge of the thicket through which she must pass to come out upon the road we had left. She kissed her hand prettily to me, and with that disappeared from my sight.

And then I realized that I was alone in the woods, in the home of the man who last night had burned the castle of La Santa Cruz, and had brought the peasants to their knees in awe of him.

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#### CHAPTER IX.—THE CAMP IN THE FOREST.

THE glen was still as death. Such breeze as the dawn had given fell away before the rising sun. I could hear a mountain torrent bubbling and splashing in the heart of the thicket. Tinkling bells upon the distant high road spoke of a *diligence* passing. A boar burst from the bushes and went grunting into the woods. But there was no sign of man ; nothing to tell me that I was not alone in the forest.

It must have been past six o'clock then. I had not slept eight hours since I set foot in Spain. The temptation to throw myself down upon the soft grass, and to let the great chestnut trees be the sentinels of sleep, was difficult to resist. But curiosity prevailed. All the things I had seen, the

stories I had heard, kept me waking and alert. The very mystery of the place itself was a whip for the mind. The more I saw of it, the further I penetrated the depths of that shady glen, the greater was my desire to go on. What man, I asked, would make a home in such a place? Where was his house? What forbade the pretty gipsy going with me to his gates? The forest answered me with a rustle of shading leaves; the torrent splashed in its rocky bed and seemed to say, "A jest, a jest." I thought that I was the master of the glen, indeed—so little did I know.

There was a bridle path by the torrent's side, a soft track through sedgy grass and squelching bog. When I threw the reins upon my horse's neck and let him go at his will, he followed the path readily as though familiar with it. Thus it came that I was carried to a very glade of leaves, to a bower aglow with green lights, walled by high bushes, wet with the freshening foam of the cascade. So near were we to the burn that the spray half blinded me when I stooped to some forbidding branch. Often I thought that the willing beast I rode was about to step into the channel of the icy water. But he went on with a sure foot; and when we had followed the track, it may have been for half an hour, he neighed with pleasure as though here was the end of it, and began to trot up the hillside. And so he brought me to as picturesque a place as I have seen in all the world.

An amphitheater of the hills; a great circle of green grass cut in the very heart of the thicket! Mighty chestnut trees shaded it on all sides. The forest beyond was dark and thick and often impenetrable. I could see fair bowers with creepers and flowering shrubs knotted about the stately trunks; mazy paths wound their way into the heart of the copse; the torrent whirled down upon my right hand, falling here from slab to slab of marble into pools green with spongy mosses. A garden of the mountains, indeed; a haven of solitude surpassing all I had heard or read of.

In this theater of nature's wonders I drew rein a spell to let my winded horse breathe. For the matter of that, the further I went up the hillside the more foolish did my journey appear to be. Here had I ridden for the half of an hour and had seen nothing of the man or of his house. I determined that if another mile gave me no more news of him, I would return to Zaragoza and to old Benjamin and abandon the fool's errand forever. As the thing turned out, the resolution was premature. I had not been ten seconds in that amphitheater when a rustling of the leaves upon my left hand told me that I was no longer alone. The barrel of a pistol held within an inch of my head added an unpleasant certainty to the surmise.

If you have been in half a dozen actions and have had three inches of a dervish's knife in your leg—as a slight token of his esteem—the fact that a pistol is about to comb your hair is not as disconcerting as it might be to the mere amateur. To tell the truth, my only thought at such a time was an exclamation upon that folly which had permitted me to be led by the pretty eyes and the seductive lips of the gipsy girl. Not for a moment did I doubt that I had fallen into the hands of the gentlemen of the mountains; and it occurred to me, for humorous thoughts will arise even in moments of peril, that a man who had enjoyed at no distant date the hospitality of the official



receiver in London was scarcely such a prize as even a fourth rate brigand might aspire to.

"Gentlemen," I said, springing lightly from my horse, "you have made some mistake."

The man who had the pistol lowered it and smiled. He was tall for a Spaniard, and had a certain air which was not the air of a cutthroat. I noticed at once that his clothes of black velvet were very rich and new; a diamond ring of undoubted value glistened upon the finger which hooked the trigger of his revolver. He wore a sombrero hat with white feathers in it, a decoration imitated by four of his fellows who had come out of the thicket to stand with him. The same richness of dress and ease of manner marked the newcomers, who appeared to carry no arms, nor to think arms necessary.

"Senor," said the man with the pistol, in answer to my protest, "there is no mistake. You are the Englishman, Captain Noel Falconer."

I looked at him, astonished that he should have my name.

"And if I am, senor?"

"If you are, senor, you will please to tell me your business at Torla?"

It was clear to me that he knew my business as well as I did. To have bandied words with him in such a place and at such a time would have been the amusement of a madman.

"My business is with the prince," I answered unhesitatingly; "I have come from London to see him."

The stranger bowed and thrust his pistol into his belt; the others began to stare at me, yet not so plainly that I could take offense at it. When they had exchanged a few words together, and had come to some agreement, the man who first addressed me—he of the velvet breeches and the red beard—spoke again.

"Captain," he said, "if you will come with me, I will take you to my master."

He beckoned one of the others to lead my horse, and, without more ado, crossed the amphitheater. There was the mouth of a path opening there, narrow and tortuous and almost hidden by the flowering shrubs which bordered it. We followed the new track, perhaps for the third part of a mile, going upward all the time. Then, without warning, it ceased and we stood in a little glade where a tent of boughs had been built and a camp pitched.

I have seen some picturesque things in my life, but that camp in the heart of the forest of Torla remains one of the treasures of memory. Quite suddenly, out of the darker maze of the thicket, we passed to a park worthy of old England; to a scene which recalled to me all the childish stories of Robin Hood and the merry men of history. Here beneath magnificent trees a dozen men were enjoying their siesta. Some in hammocks; some at all their length upon the grass; some seated before a table the cloth of which was like a coverlet of snow—they slept or chatted or smoked in dreamy indolence. The June sun which scourged the burning plains below was to them a friend of sleep. Canopies of leaves, cunningly entwined, sheltered

the idlers from the fierce light. Breezes blowing down from the icy peaks above tempered the air so that it was a joy to live. I seemed to have been carried upon the wings of magic out of the world of reality to a dreamland surpassing all the fairy pictures of my childhood. The promises of Isabella de Gavarnie came leaping to my mind—the promise of fortune beyond my hopes; of a life like no other in the world. In such an eldorado of the mountains, I said, it would be happiness to live and die.

My guide, I say, led me to this place unchallenged by any sentry; unannounced by any sign or word. Even more astonishing was the indifference displayed by those we now came among to our approach, or to the fact that a stranger stood at their gates. Not a man, I believe, so much as turned his head as we advanced. The loiterers at the table, busy with their cigarettes and wine flasks, scarce gave me a look. In our turn we passed them indifferently, going straight to the tent I have spoken of—to an arbor of leaves and flowers built against the trunk of a mighty tree, yet guarded by no other sentinel than a huge boarhound.

"Senor," cried my guide, while the hound began to cool his nose against the leather of my boots, "if you will wait here a moment, the prince will see you."

He disappeared into the arbor, and I heard his voice there. Before ten seconds had passed, he came to the door again and beckoned me to follow him.

And so he brought me face to face with Lorenzo de la Cruz, that soldier of fortune at whose name, as Isabella de Gavarnie promised me, all Europe was soon to tremble.

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#### CHAPTER X.—LORENZO DE LA CRUZ.

My guide apart, there were two in the arbor when I entered. Of these, one was a mere lad, a hunchback with a fair, boyish face, who sat at a plain deal writing table tracing lines upon a map of France. The other was a man remarkable enough to have attracted attention in any company.

Let me speak first of Lorenzo the Magnificent, as then I saw him in the heart of the forest of Torla. A man of the middle height clothed in a negligé suit of white canvas, he had the face of the classic Greek, long and thin, and seen to the best advantage in profile. Black hair, coarse and glossy, curled upon his high and striking forehead; his eyes protruded as the eyes of a victim to insomnia. I said that I had rarely seen such shoulders or such arms; the breadth of the man, the development of limb and body, would have won the admiration of an athlete. Moreover, his hands were small as those of a woman; his feet scarce showed beneath his ample trousers. Such a combination of strength and weakness in face and body I had never known. And beyond this, his jaw was underhung, so that when he closed his lips he had the face of the sensualist and the mouth of the criminal. Not until he spoke could you forget these physical contrasts. But directly he opened his lips, one impression alone was possible—the impression of personal power, of determination, of tremendous will. I could imagine men trembling

before a word from such a man. His gesture was the gesture of the autocrat. His glance seemed to wither and to burn wherever it fell.

Such was the man I saw pacing the arbor in the camp above Torla. Whatever had occupied his mind while we came up occupied it still when my guide announced me. Not a greeting did I get; not a word or look. Steadily from end to end of the room, from end to end and back again, went the thick set, burly, bull-necked figure. I saw that the shirt of fine cambric he wore was open at the throat; there were spots of ink upon his white canvas trousers; his coat was put on anyhow and the sleeves of it were turned up above his wrists. He wore no jewelry; he carried no arms. If we had not been in Spain, I should have said that he was a prosperous land owner, busy with the affairs of his estate. But I knew that he was not. I knew that I had seen him (for instinct told me so) riding last night at the head of the white horsemen who burned the castle of La Santa Cruz. And I could not but ask myself, was this the man I had come to Spain to serve—against the world, as the woman promised me.?

The master of the camp—for I did not doubt that this was the master—broke the strange silence at last dramatically and with a Spaniard's gesture. Halting unexpectedly, he began to stare at me with a look which set all my nerves tingling. His eyes seemed able to hold me still and powerless. I could not face that steadfast gaze, yet was helpless to turn away.

"Well," he exclaimed, in perfect English—and that was all.

I shook the spell off with a great mental effort, and answered him.

"I have come to put my sword at your service. My name is Noel Falconer; I was recently——"

"In the Tenth Hussars," he interposed, adding a gesture as much as to say, "I know that well."

"Prince," said I, "if you know me, there is no need for me to speak——"

He clasped his hands behind his back and began to walk up and down the room again. I do not believe that he was thinking of me at all. His mind had gone back to the map of France lying there upon the writing table; and he stopped to trace a line upon it with a pencil snatched from the fingers of the hunchback.

"We shall go that way," he said to the lad decisively; "I do not wish to hear any argument. Let Jussuf be ready at midnight with twenty men. He will strip the house and bring the horses here. Afterwards he will come to me for orders—you understand. Then write—write it quickly!"

The hunchback took the pen in his hands while his master paced the room twice, and then asked:

"Well, have you done it, Ximeno?"

"I have begun it, prince."

"Begun it! Holy God, that I should be kept waiting like this!"

A pettier ebullition of temper was not to be conceived. I might have been before some peevish woman rating a housemaid. But the surprise was that the lad at the table took no notice whatever of his scolding. He continued placidly to write. The other, meanwhile, had condescended to remember that I was in the room, and to stare at me again.

"What is your name?" he asked, forgetting that he had already uttered it.

"My name is Noel Falconer," I said; and added, "Shall we write it down?"

He shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "A fool's jest."

"You have come here from London, Captain Falconer?"

"From London, prince."

"Then you shall tell me your story."

He threw himself, with the air of one greatly fatigued, upon a wicker sofa and motioned me to sit beside him. I could see that he was watching me keenly and waiting for my words.

"My story is a short one," I said simply. "I am a man without money or friends. All I know of life has been learned with the English army. Three months ago I resigned my commission in the Tenth Hussars. Today I come to Spain, believing that a new commission will be offered to me."

"You believe that. What makes you believe it?"

"The things I see around me; the things I saw in the hills last night."

"You came through the hills, then?"

"Certainly."

For a moment he appeared to debate upon it; then he turned the subject.

"You can drill a division of cavalry, captain?"

"It would be strange if I could not."

"And were the finest swordsman in your regiment?"

"They said so."

"You have knowledge of tactics—you have studied the science of war?"

"That is the one thing I have studied."

"You know something of artillery?"

It was my time to hesitate.

"As much as a cavalry officer ever knows."

"You are honest, at least."

"Honesty is the riches of a poor man, prince."

"And this honest man comes here to help me; he knows something of the service, then?"

"He knows nothing, prince."

"But he has the wish to learn?"

"He has the wish to quit a life which is a curse to him; he has the wish to own a horse again—the wish to forget that his name is a byword in England."

He nodded his head at the words as though they pleased him. Then, very rudely, he rose from his seat to go and look over the shoulder of the lad Ximeno. Five minutes must have passed before he spoke to me again.

"Come," he said, folding his arms and posing in one of those dramatic attitudes which were as ridiculous as they were frequent, "who sent you to this place?"

It was the question I had dreaded all along. I remembered Madame de Gavarnie's warnings. Yet what tale could I tell him.

"Oh," I stammered at last, "they told me of you in Zaragoza."

"That is a lie," he cried angrily. "This honest man begins well; he tells me a lie."

"Did you suppose that I would tell you the truth?" I asked.

"Captain Falconer," he exclaimed very seriously, "a lie is a poor introduction to Lorenzo de la Cruz."

"Then let us have no lies. I came to you because a friend of yours told me that you wished for help. What matter who the friend was. If he spoke well, and you seek swords, here is a man ready to serve you; a man who can find no other vocation in life but that of the soldier—a man who has yet the best part of his life to live. If your service is such as he may embark upon——"

He hushed me with a gesture of his hand.

"You lied to me," he reiterated in peevish anger. "I do not want to hear you; I have no place for you." And then, looking to the guide who had led me to the place, he said, "Take this man away!"

He turned upon his heel and went over to the table again. If he had struck me, the insult could not have been greater. To this day, I do not know what restrained my arm or kept me from answering him as I would have answered any other living man.

"Prince," I said, "there is no need to take me away, nor is there any man in Torla who could do that for you."

He looked at me over his shoulder, and then spoke to the trooper at my elbow.

"Will you not obey me?" he cried. "Take that man away, and do not let me see his face again!"

The next moment we were out in the air again.

"Well," I asked my guide, "and what now?"

"Excellency," he said, "when the sun sets you will have ceased to live."

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#### CHAPTER XI.—THE PRISON OF THE TORRENT.

"WHEN the sun sets you will have ceased to live."

I stepped back and looked at the man. Was he, then, a *farceur*, too? Had some great jest been played upon me when I was sent to the mountains? The man's face gave me "No" for an answer. I seemed to read pity written upon it.

"Come," said I, "we have talked nonsense enough. If your master has no need of my services, who is to prevent my returning to Torla?"

"We shall prevent you, excellency."

He put a whistle to his lips and blew it shrilly. The answer was worthy of the place. Scarce had the note done echoing in the hills before six men stood at the fellow's side; and in the hand of each there glistened the barrel of a pistol.

"We shall prevent you, excellency," he repeated, as he pointed to the grim figures around me. "Lift but a hand and your last minute has come."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"One man does not fight six," I said contemptuously.

"Not at all; he follows them."

He made a sign, and the six troopers, all wearing Spanish capes and sombrero hats, closed about me and began to march up the hillside. Presently we struck upon a path winding into a higher wood of pines. I looked down and saw the camp below me—a nest cut out from the very heart of the forest. The idlers there were still seated at the table. Servants moved in and out between the trees, bearing dishes and flasks of wine. Ximeno, the hunchback, stood at the door of the arbor. Apparently he had finished the instructions to Jussuf.

Even upon those heights above the glen the heat was almost unendurable. I loosened the cloak and carried it upon my arm. The traveling coat which old Benjamin had bought me weighed heavy as a wrap of furs. Moreover, I had ridden all night and my limbs were so stiff that I stumbled often as I walked. For the threat of the man who guided me I did not care a scudo. To say that I believed him, that I imagined myself in any danger, would be to exaggerate my own foresight. Yet what was about to happen, what the night was to bring, I knew no more than the dead.

Upward and still upward—I began to think at last that they would carry me to the very summit of the mighty mountain which towered, a monarch of the peaks, above that valley of forest. The pine woods seemed interminable. My fatigue was so great, my hunger for sleep so dreadful, that at last I stopped altogether and thought that I must swoon.

"Do what you like," I said; "I go no further."

The troop halted, pressing closely about me. Some one put a flask to my lips and I drank a long draft. The guide, he who spoke kindly from the first, patted me upon the arm encouragingly.

"Excellency," he said, "it is not a hundred paces now. Take courage."

They gave me the support of their arms, and so we went on. I remember little of that walk save that it carried me ever upward—over a carpet of moss, beneath a roof of pines. When the pines ceased we stood before a sheer precipice, at the foot of the mighty mountain itself, and in the face of this precipice there was a wicket gate barred with iron as the gate of a cage. The leader of the troop opened the grating with a key, and I followed him into that which appeared to be a great cave cut out from the rock of the mountain. But I had no will nor strength to examine the place, and seeing a rude bed of straw before me, I threw myself down upon it and instantly fell asleep.

When you wake in a strange place, your first memories are not those of yesterday, but of a day remoter; of a scene unassociated with the new house to which you have come. I must have slept at least seven hours upon my bed of straw, for when I opened my eyes there was a shimmer of twilight already in the cave and the great heat of the day had passed. Indeed, the air was raw and fresh at such an altitude; and I remember that my first act, when I sat up in the straw, was to draw my cape around me and to recall the strange circumstances under which old Benjamin had bought it for

me. From that I passed to a memory of pretty Giralda, and of the night when I had kissed her at the cathedral gate of Zaragoza. Where was my little guide now? I pictured her riding through the hills on her famous pony; and from that—suddenly, with a chill at my heart—I went on to my meeting with the master of the camp, and to the words which the guide had spoken.

There are a few occasions in all our lives when we realize, as in some dreadful vision, the whole meaning of death; moments when the terror of eternity and of its mysteries is the master of our minds—when we say to ourselves all men must die, and the day will come when we as individuals shall think no more, speak no more, look no more upon the things we have loved! One such occasion in my own life was the moment of my awaking in the mountain cave above Torla. That which had been a jest to me in the morning presented itself now as a reality. How, I asked, if the man meant the words? I had come to his camp uninvited; possibly had learned some of his secrets. He knew, I argued, of my meeting with Isabella de Gavarnie. Would such a man, he who had burned the castle of La Santa Cruz, stand at my death? Would the Spanish authorities be a whip for him, for one whose agents, as I had seen, were the friends of the police in every town? The more I thought of it, the clearer the thing became. Here, sheltered in the nest of the Pyrenées, was a troop of men planning I knew not what deviltry, what conspiracy against the Spanish government. Chance had directed me to the lair of these conspirators. If they had sent me about my business, I could tell a tale in all Spain. But if I were dead?

They had left a wine bottle and a loaf of bread by my side when they locked me in the cave. I drank a deep draft of the coarse liquor and then began to examine my prison. From the first moment of waking, I had been conscious of a curious moaning noise in my ears; and now, when I began to look about me, the secret of the sounds was disclosed. The cave had but three walls to it. The fourth wall was a fierce cascade, roaring down through a vast tunnel to join some river of the valley below. No stranger prison ever was built. The companionship of that black river falling from the breast of the mountain above, and showing to the prisoner a face of glittering waters, was worthy of the Spanish race. I could well imagine the victim of captivity tempted by the weird voice of the torrent, until he cast himself headlong into its waters, and found a tomb beneath the mountains.

Elsewhere the cave was large and lofty, one of the limestone caves common to the district of Torla. At any other time I should have found many beauties in the depending stalactites, which were nature's ornaments of its roof. And it was lighted, too, by some other window than that of the gate of bars through which I had passed. A glow of the sinking sun shone warm upon its splendid pinnacles and showed a thousand lights playing over the wall of waters. I could well have imagined myself in some cathedral forgotten by man, but existing still to the glory of nature's God. The view through the bars of the gate helped me to the thought. I could look thence upon the silent forest; could see the lizard leaping from crag to crag; could hear the tinkle of distant bells. But no human thing was there. The sink-

ing sun lighted a scene of desolation and of solitude. I asked myself, "What of the man, what of the camp?" The music of the torrent was my answer.

"When the sun sets you will have ceased to live."

I repeated the words, laughing at them, yet unable to silence them in my ears. I was but thirty years of age, and misfortune had left my hunger for life unsatisfied. What if the rising sun of tomorrow shone down upon my grave? The mystery of our end would be a mystery to me no longer. A trench cut in the hills would be my bed; the water soaking through the soil my meat and drink. And I had left England for this. For this the gipsy girl had led me through the mountains—that I should be shot down by a man whose name I did not know at the dawn of day. Rage at my impotence, at the grotesque folly which had brought me to such a place, came upon me as a fever. "I will not die," I said. And then I laughed aloud, saying, "A jest, a jest."

The red light vanished from the pine woods; the sky was no longer aflame with crimson radiance; the misty grays of night began to gather over the mountains. "The sun will set in ten minutes," I said. Yet no one came to me. Silence reigned in the woods; I could hear no step upon the moss without. As the minutes were numbered, I began to watch the passing of the day with a sick man's fear of the darkness. Five minutes—ten minutes! No longer a cap of light upon the snows above. A little spell of waiting—and still I stood alone!

From this time I shut my eyes and began to count the minutes. "It will be dark in five minutes—in ten," I said. When next I looked out toward the woods a file of men stood before the gate and a priest was unlocking the door. The hour had come, then; the man had not jested. I drew my cloak around me and turned to the priest. After all, I was a soldier and had been with death before that day.

"Excellency," said the old man, advancing into the prison and laying a gentle hand upon my arm, "you know why I have come here?"

"I know nothing," I said.

He shook his head.

"You are of our blessed faith?" he asked.

"I am an Englishman, and have English friends."

"You would listen to me if I speak to you?"

"By all means, if you have anything to tell me; though why I should listen to you, God knows."

"You shall listen to me because you are going to die."

"In that case we waste time. I ask only one favor—be quick with it."

He raised his hands as though to say, "It is not my work." I remember that his benign and kindly face was the only face I saw when they tied a bandage round my eyes and set my back against the wall. Of other recollections I have few. It is in my memory that I felt behind me with my hands to be sure that I stood quite close to the rock. My dread of falling face downward when the bullets struck me was childish.

*Max Pemberton.*

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



## LOST IN THE NUBIAN DESERT.

A thrilling experience that befell a traveler as the result of a slight mishap—The terrors of a sand storm and the menace that confronts frail humanity in the desert wilds.

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Col. Damrell, the clubman and traveler, has just returned from the Soudan, etc.—*Society Journal*.

SEEING the above in a metropolitan weekly, and being desirous of renewing acquaintance with an interesting old friend, for he always had a new experience of thrilling interest to exploit, I hastened up to his favorite club, and between puffs of Havana Perfectos I obtained the following account of a weird predicament, which I give as nearly verbatim as my memory allows me.

"The desert!" exclaimed the colonel rapturously. "Ah, my boy, standing on the brink of the great Nubian sand seas, one is transfixed. The sun was just peeping over the barren cliffs beyond the Nile, tipping them with a dull fire, when the order came to start. My heart leaped. I forgot all dangers, and thought only of adventure, of new sensations. The chief guide gave the word, and we mounted, giving civilization, home, the very world itself, it seemed, a single backward glance.

"There were five of us, with guides and men; and it was the third day of last March that we started over the difficult trail from Korosko, taking the southward trail toward Absoh, leading through the very bowels of the Nubian sands. Our objects were diverse. My own was to discover some rare antiquities of which I had heard rumors, but the principal interest on the part of the others was to rediscover the abandoned gold mines of Absoh. Knowing that the Nubians are confirmed in their indolence and utterly unacquainted with the modern methods of prospecting, the two experts of the party, one a Californian and the other an Australian, both thoroughly familiar with gold bearing regions, felt convinced that with patient effort there was a possibility of unearthing a fortune, and the exciting experiment was at least worth the trial.

"For four days our little caravan snailed along the barren sands, passing El Murrah, or springs of bitter water, and all went well. Then the journey, which for the first day or two was full of varied novelties, began to grow painfully monotonous. To make matters worse, the geerbah skins, which were used to carry fresh water from the Nile, were daily growing flatter. The wells of El Murrah were saline and heavy with brackish sediment; and though the camels drank of the water without suffering ill effects, the men who indulged freely were seized with intense gripings. Two days southward from the wells a strange incident occurred.

"Our way led over the beaten camel trail, centuries old, and yet every month the tract was obliterated by the drifting sands. Now and then we scarcely knew our way save that the route was pointed out to us by the wreckage of former caravans which had shed the sick and the exhausted by the wayside, both man and beast, leaving them to the merciless sun and the prowling jackals till death relieved them. There is no place on the face of the globe where the survival of the fittest means so much as here on the Nubian desert, where the caravan never stops; and if the poor native cannot plod on, no halt is made for his recovery. The consequence is, that the further one progresses, the more skeletons of men and beasts point the uncertain way through the drifting sands, and the sight is surely most depressing.

"My camel was not a particularly fast one. He had a habit of lagging behind, so that once or twice a day the caravan was compelled to halt and wait for me to come up, like a lost vertebra of a skeleton reptile. On this occasion, while somewhat behind the party, a fine young gazelle crossed my path not a dozen rods ahead, dashing with sudden fright into a little ravine which appeared to be closed at the further end, so that apparently he was made a prisoner. Rifle in hand I leaped from my camel. Eagerly I made my way through the hot, ankle deep sand to the little ravine, following it up some distance, ready to bring down my game. To my surprise, however, I found that there were several turns beyond, and soon saw that my chase was bootless. Dejectedly I made my way back to my camel, which had not stirred, and seemed only too glad for the little respite from the racking toil of the march. Taking a good draught from my geerba of water, and also filling my canteen, I drew the beast to his knees, as is customary when mounting, so that by placing my foot upon his neck, by his upward movement of the head, he would raise me, enabling me to step into the cushioned seat between the humps. As I was fixing my foot on the camel's neck, however, the sudden raising of his head caused a knife to slip from my belt in such a way that it grazed the beast's flanks, giving him a slight but stinging flesh wound. Up he started, and so suddenly with that quick, upward throw of the body, that I was pitched back clean over his humps, and fell head foremost in the sands. Then, to my consternation, with a queer snort of rage, the camel made a little circle, and with its head thrown up like an ostrich pursued by a hunter, he bumped along at a rapid pace over the trail in the direction of the caravan.

"In vain I shouted, in vain I shrieked all the Arab coaxings and imprecations that I knew. Then, quite exhausted, I squatted in the sands, alone, panting, enraged, and desolate, watching my mount fade to a speck on the horizon. I grew resigned, however, feeling that within three or four hours at most my comrades would be returning for me.

"I shall never forget the first sickening sense of loneliness that oppressed me there in the great desert, apparently abandoned of Heaven and earth. I had no food and only a little water. I knew that it was days and days by camel journey from any succoring hand, and that I was now completely at the mercy of the nomadic bands of robbers which invest the rocky ravines,

and would, moreover, be beset by the jackals and vultures the moment I showed signs of fainting under the scourging sun. The strain grew maddening. For a long time I bore it; and then no longer able to fight with the demon of silence, and haunted more than ever now by the presence of human and animal skeletons half buried in the drifting sands, I arose and plodded on. But little did I dream that there was yet a more dreaded enemy than vultures, leopards, or even the predatory robbers, soon to encompass me.

"The first warning that I had of its terrible approach was the soft obscuration of the sun, which stood so straight overhead that it cast my form in a circling shadow about me just to the tips of my toes. A sort of silken mist floated before the coppery sky. Then this thin cloudiness seemed to descend, the wind arose, and the sirocco grew heavier and more oppressive. I bowed my head, pressing forward with increasing difficulty now. Up from the limitless southwest the dreaded scourge was closing down upon me. 'My God!' I murmured at last, losing courage at the sound of my own voice, 'It is a simoon!'

"The wind was rising in a gale. I heard the roar of the sand blast from afar. These gusts of hot, white atoms grew sharper and fiercer now; and if I had worn a King Arthur coat of mail, I scarcely think it would have been proof against that volley of deadly dust. It penetrated my clothing till I felt the layer of it chafing the flesh at every movement. My nostrils were clogged so that breathing became more labored and painful. My ears were stuffed up so that it deadened the increasing whistle and roar; and though my eyes were almost closed, the awful volley seemed to penetrate the very lids. Then I finally succumbed, falling to my knees, and at last prone upon my face, covering my head with the ample folds of the burnouse.

"For a long time I lay there in the thick, drifting mounds, the monotonous shriek of the simoon lulling me to sleep. It was not a refreshing repose, but one filled with frightful nightmares and monitions of evil. Once in a while the shrill cry of a lost jackal or a desert bird broke the abhorrent spell, but the sound brought no cheer. After what seemed to be a dangerously long time, I awoke, recovering from this sort of daze rather than sleep, and looked vaguely about me. Shaking the sand from my burnouse, I took out my watch. It had stopped, the dust having penetrated it and clogged its delicate machinery. I stood up, and brushing the sand from my eyes, peered over the trackless plain. Nothing but a dead grim waste of whiteness; but, thank Heaven, the storm was abating. I vaguely remembered the direction of my course, although the trail was now wholly obliterated, and started bravely on. But so chafed and faint was I that I soon found all effort torture, and at last sank in my tracks with a moan.

"For a long time I lay in a sort of stupor. Then I heard a voice. It was more human than any I had heard in the loneliness of the desert, although it was a moan of anguish rather than a call of rescue. I rose and turned sharply in the direction of the sound, and soon perceived a kneeling, swaying figure at some distance. The thought of a human being, let him prove whatever he might, made my poor heart leap. I came closer, and was amazed to discover that the swaying figure was that of a half naked and

more than half blind slave boy. There was a moveless shape half buried in the drifting mound before him. I uncovered it, amazed to find that it was a Nubian sheik lying upon his face, quite dead.

"When the slave realized the presence of another human being, he fell groveling at my feet as if I had been an angel come from Heaven. His mouth and tongue were swollen with fever, and I pressed the canteen to his lips, but he could not drink. He was chattering wildly in a language I did not understand, raving, and more than half demented. The sheik had been robbed of everything worth carrying away, the scoundrels leaving him only his burnouse and a small skin of water which was already flat and dried into a chip. The poor traveler must have died from exhaustion, for there were no wounds upon his person save a few scratches on the wrist where the slave boy had tried to suck a drop of blood from his dead master to keep himself from perishing. As the slave was more used to the tortures of the desert, naturally the sheik succumbed first.

"Meeting with such companions in misery, for a little time I almost forgot my own perils and suffering. Slowly the slave lad revived under my simple ministrations. Then I got somewhat of his story. The sheik's caravan had successfully resisted attack upon the march, but the two had become separated from the company, and being overtaken, were robbed and left to die. All this had taken place more than three days since; and the slave had kept up the lonely and maddening vigil by his dead master with almost sublime heroism. Knowing that my comrades would soon be retreating to recover me dead or alive, as soon as the slave was able to walk we took the burnouse from the dead sheik and started back toward the trail. The way was very difficult and slow, and I was compelled almost to carry the emaciated lad bodily. On we plodded till the darkness settled about us, and then making ourselves as comfortable as possible, we lay down side by side and watched out the night.

"The next morning, although the slave boy was in much better physical condition, I felt that I myself was fast succumbing. I arose once or twice and tried to make a little circle over the sand mounds to get my bearings, but soon gave up the enigma. I figured matters out with the calculation of a physician. I had water enough to last us another day, or, for myself alone, two days. I almost wished I had not happened upon the slave now, for it might be that my own life would be sacrificed in this deed of charity. Then I drove the selfish thought from my heart. If one perished, we should both perish. He had been a godsend, giving me companionship, and how did I not know that he had not saved me from something worse than death—from madness. With brotherly care I divided the water drop by drop—water more precious than blood. The slave was grateful—pitifully so at what he perceived to be my sacrifice. When he saw that I was going to pieces, however, he not only refused to lap up these precious drops of salvation, but actually thrust out his arms to me with the offer of his own blood to save me. This touched me very deeply. I had opened my canteen and saved his life for a little while, and now he was ready to open his veins to save mine!

"On the morning of the second day I gave up hope, and began a

rambling letter to my friends in case they should ever find me. Even this little exertion overcame me; and after a few scrawls I gave up the task. Hours of complete unconsciousness in the broil of the sun came oftener now. Again the slave lad's long suffering on the desert served him well. I realized that he would survive me by a day, or perhaps more. I gave him my effects, weapons and all, making him understand that in case my friends came my belongings were to be turned over to them, and that the slave himself should be rewarded. Then I sank in my dust bed, falling into a sort of coma.

"I was aroused by the crack of a rifle. The lad had used my weapon well, bringing down a small antelope with a single shot. Too weak to rise, I turned my head and watched the boy crawl over to his prize. After what seemed to be the struggle of his life, he dragged the deer toward me. Then I closed my eyes with a prayer of thankfulness, and soon felt the warm blood of the gazelle, dropping from the bullet wound on its breast, bathing my swollen lips. The effect was magical. I revived—I lived again! The slave was now saving my life even as I had saved his. The gratitude he showed gave me renewed courage.

"But, strange as it may seem, the happy incident of the shooting of the young deer exercised rather a depressing than a hopeful influence upon the spirits of my stanch champion. The poor little lad refused to partake of the saving grace which he had vouchsafed me. Hourly he grew weaker. Delirium followed, and I was compelled to use my poor strength to force the raw food into his mouth, and all to no purpose. Can any one realize how my heart was now pricked by a consciousness of the heroism of this Nubian slave during these terrible hours? Ah, the vigil was long and bitter—through torrid days, and nights black as only Nubia knows them, with death and desolation encompassing us on every hand, the prowling jackals and the starving tigers calling fiercely to one another at the smell of blood, only awaiting my sinking into sleep to plunge into the carnival which should end all for me. In order to rob the night of its terrors, and the day of its madness, I strove with my poor patient who was fast ebbing into the last slumber, with none to succor, none to restore. I felt that with him gone I should lose all hope, all wish to live. We seemed like the last two surviving human beings of earth, and I chose that he, the child of Nubian darkness, and I, the son of Western day, might go hand in hand together.

"On that last day of my desolate watch the sun was sinking over the limitless sand ocean, and I thought to see it no more. I tried to pray. Ah, what had all these bitter days been but one living, blood sweating prayer—one cry borne up as from the pits of deepest Tophet into the responseless Heaven! I became prophetic now. The past seemed to become clear and unclouded, the future transparent and filled with loveliest visions. I knew this to be the beginning of the end, and so sank back resignedly, even welcoming now the cup I had so long shrank from with weak and waning terror—the blessed hemlock of oblivion.

"Suddenly, along the borders of the afterglow on the horizon, I saw a dark object stealing up like a phantom, bathed in the glory of celestial

twilight. The sight was so supernatural that it stirred me strangely; but I soon perceived that it was no phantom of my wasting mind, but a reality—a blessed truth. Soon that moving object took the proportions of a serpent moving toward me—on, on, slowly, solemnly like a penitents' procession toward a pagan temple; and then realizing at last, I moaned aloud, 'It is the caravan! Thank God, it is the caravan!' and so sank back unconscious.

"When I revived long after, there was the cool mouth of a flask pressed to my lips, and strong, tender arms were about me. I opened my eyes. 'Comrades!' was all I could murmur; but they heard it, and there was a shout of triumph.

"My God! We thought you dead long, long ago,' I heard them cry brokenly. 'What could have saved him till now? It is a miracle—a miracle!'

"I tried to speak, but there was no breath within to give my heart utterance. I turned and drew the burnouse from the brow of the still figure at my side. 'Save him!' I cried, though my voice fell in a whisper. 'Save him; for it was he who saved me!'

"But they only shook their heads. One glance told the truth. My poor slave lad, my rescuer, my solace, my one joy in darkness and sorrow, had moved out on that long, bleak pilgrimage through the Unknown Desert that knows no return path, yet with the glory of departing day wreathing about the still ashen forehead the saintly halo of a hero and a brother."

*George J. Southwick.*

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#### A GENTLE HINT.

"You may not kiss me, sir," she said,  
As saucily she tossed her head,  
While laughter welled deep in her eyes;  
"You may not kiss me—till snow flies."

Now this befell in jocund May,  
When all the air with bloom was gay;  
But I—I wished each leaf was sere  
And dull December days were here,

Till there beneath the apple trees  
White petals showered in every breeze  
And lay in fairy windrows piled;  
"Why, how it snows!" she said, and smiled.

*Winthrop Packard.*

## THE VOYAGE OF THE PULO WAY.\*

A record of some strange doings at sea—The bold project of a tramp steamer's captain and the sequel to its execution—A justifiable mutiny and its thrilling episodes.

### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THOMAS RAVENSFORD, who tells the story, is on his way from Hong Kong to Manila, to take there a better position with his firm than the one he has filled at the home office for several years. As it is important that he should reach his destination without delay, he secures passage on the first vessel sailing for Manila, which is a sort of tramp steamer—the Pulo Way. Her commander, Captain Macshiel, is manifestly unwilling to take a passenger on this voyage, but finally consents to do so. Ravensford finds some odd things in the life on board, not the least curious of which is the evolution of a Chinese coolie into a Mr. Gupp, who is dubbed third mate, and does an astonishing amount of practice firing from a cannon which is set up forward. The reason for this is apparent when Ravensford learns from the second mate, Hayling, a very decent sort of fellow, that Macshiel intends no less a crime than to intercept the Australian mail steamer, *Chung Tong*, and rob her of the fifty thousand pounds in gold she is reported to be carrying. Protest is useless, and when the *Chung Tong* appears she is halted by a signal of distress flown by the Pulo Way. Ravensford is sent, with Hayling, in the small boat that is to bring back from the liner the price of her whole hull.

### CHAPTER VIII.—THE LAST OF THE LINER.

HAYLING and I sat together in the stern, he grimly mute, I bursting with surmise. His right hand grasped the tiller, and he fixed his keen eyes steadily ahead. The man who rowed stroke, a big, gaunt specimen of the northern Chinaman, grinned meaningly at me from time to time. An impertinent grin it was, and one that I might have resented in another place. But, guessing the fellow's thoughts, and why he had been sent with us, I kept my temper. As I turned about to look at our ship, I whispered to Hayling:

"You are not one of them?"

"In the way that you are," he replied, without looking.

"Can't we board this vessel?"

He shook his head. "Impossible. She would be sunk in ten minutes."

I felt that this was true, and thought some unkind things of Mr. Gupp. Our stroke grinned unpleasantly, as though he understood. I was not then aware of the concealed weapons on the men, nor did I imagine that at our first attempt to fly those weapons would have been used against us.

About a dozen yards from the *Chung Tong* Hayling called to the men to stop, and then, standing up in the boat, he saluted the captain, a middle aged, brown bearded man, with a fat, choleric face.

"You have fifty thousand pounds on board?" he cried brusquely.

*This story began in the September issue of THE ARGOSY, which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 10 cents.*

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"Well?" answered the captain, whose rage was so great that he could scarcely control himself.

"I am very sorry, sir," said Hayling, "but my orders are imperative. You must hand it over."

"And if I refuse?"

"We shall probably send you to the bottom."

The man's face grew absolutely purple, and he clutched the rail convulsively. A very torrent of passion raged within him.

"And if I hand you over the money?"

"You will be at liberty to proceed on your voyage."

He turned to the little group which surrounded him, though he especially addressed his remarks to a distinguished looking gray headed man who seemed to be a passenger of some consequence. For a few moments several excited voices were heard, and then the captain turned to us.

"I accept your terms," he bellowed; "but if it wasn't for my passengers I'd see you damned!"

Hayling saluted, replying coldly, "When you've got the boxes up I'll come alongside to receive them."

Much bustling and excitement followed, particularly among the passengers aft. There were several of these, among whom I noticed a woman, a young girl of about twenty, whose fair hair shone brilliantly in the sunlight, and whose face, notwithstanding its eager, terrified expression, was one of singular sweetness. The aforementioned distinguished looking old gentleman came aft and spoke to her, and tried to lead her below; but she shook her head without turning, fixing us with such a look of horror that I could have jumped overboard for shame.

"Confound that girl!" muttered Hayling. "Why doesn't she go below?"

I couldn't say, but I sympathized with our worthy second mate.

Presently a man came to the side and waved for us to approach, and in him I recognized the young officer who had come off to us. As we drew near we came almost under where the young girl stood, and though I knew what I might expect, I could not help looking. Neither could Hayling. Yet one quick glance was quite enough. I think there were not at that moment two more contemptible men on the high seas than Hayling and I. I looked at him, but his lips had gone close together, and his face had grown grimly repellent.

We came alongside just where the officer stood, and quickly the first box, securely slung in a net, was lowered to us.

"There ought to be ten of these boxes," said Hayling, in his roughest, gruffest voice.

"Quite right," said the officer, looking hard at my companion. Hayling dropped his eyes; but the other, leaning further over, said in an altered tone—a tone not unmingled with curiosity:

"I say."

"Well?" said Hayling, without looking up.

"Did you ever know a fellow called Frank Hayling?"



"No," was the abrupt reply. But the face of the second mate grew harder than ever.

"You wouldn't. He was an honest man."

An ominous cloud darkened my companion's face, but beyond a quick dilating of the nostrils he gave no other sign of being stung by the taunt. Yet why had he refused to admit his identity? Equivocal as was his position, it was none of his choosing. Against it he might have struggled in vain.

But in the mean time the specie had been passed over the side till the whole ten boxes lay at our feet; then, without more ado, the men got out their oars, and amid the jeers and execrations of those aboard the Australian liner, we put about for our ship.

"I suppose I can go now?" yelled the captain.

"Not until we signal you permission," said Hayling.

As I looked up I encountered a row of angry faces, but my eyes only rested on one—the white, scared face aft, with its nimbus of golden hair.

As we rowed back to the Pulo Way my companion turned to me.

"What a strange little world this is! That fellow who spoke to me was once a shipmate of mine."

"Then why did you deny your identity?"

"Cussedness, I suppose—or some scruple as to letting my friends know that I have turned pirate."

"All the same, it's a pity we didn't try to get aboard."

"There would then have been no hope for the Chung Tong. Look ahead."

On the fo'c's'le head stood Mr. Gupp beside his gun, the gun itself trained upon the unfortunate liner. I saw and understood; but all the same I deeply regretted having to return to the Pulo Way.

"Did you see that girl aft?" I asked.

"See her!" he echoed. "I don't think I shall ever forget her scared, white face; her look of utter abhorrence. What unmitigated scoundrels she must think us!"

"What unmitigated scoundrels we are! But she was very lovely."

"Too lovely to die," said he.

"What do you mean?"

"If I hadn't seen her I should have tried to get aboard the Chung Tong."

I followed the drift of his thoughts, and while I duly admired the self sacrifice, I could not help thinking him over scrupulous. Once on board the Chung Tong we might have got away, or offered such resistance as would have given Captain Macshiel a distaste for piracy of the more adventurous order; but once back on the Pulo Way we should be entirely at the mercy of a crew of successful desperadoes. Well, it was too late now. The chance, if chance it were, had gone, and we had to face the future with what cheerfulness we could command.

A few more strokes brought us alongside the old packet, and in an incredibly short space of time the specie was transferred from our boat to the deck. As soon as all was clear I clambered up the side, and beheld the

carpenter hard at work upon one of the boxes with a chisel and a hammer. In less than a minute he had the iron binding off, the end open, and the sovereigns, neatly packed, were exposed to view.

The mate, who had been superintending this interesting performance, immediately turned to the captain, who was still on the bridge, and shouted out, "All right, sir." The old man waved his hand, and even at that distance I saw the horrid grin that spread itself over his ugly face. Then the mate had the box fastened up again and the whole of the plunder carried below.

By this time the boat had been hauled up, to which piece of work I lent a hand. Indeed, willy nilly, I seemed to be doing my best to further my apprenticeship in the piratical trade. There was grim old Hayling laying on to the rope with all his might, and so, perforce, I laid on too, without much thinking; though it might not have been so hard to guess the reason of the apparent acquiescence of the big Australian.

But on once more turning to take another peep at the Chung Tong I was somewhat astonished to see how close we were drawing; for now that we had plundered the ship there was no necessity to kiss before saying good by. Being entirely unprepared for what was about to follow, I was beginning to feel a little curious as to the meaning of the movement, when the gun forward rang out.

At first the full significance of the act did not appear obvious; but when it was followed by the utmost consternation aboard the liner, I realized in full the horror of it all. Nor did it need the second shot, which quickly followed the first, to convince me of the fiendish intention of Macshiel. I saw the shell explode low down by the side of the Chung Tong, and by the way her officers crowded to that particular portion of the bulwarks, and looked anxiously over, I knew that she had been badly hit.

Turning, I saw Hayling beside me. White wrath showed up through his dark skin; there was a nasty glitter in his eyes. Yet his voice was calm and icily cold when he spoke.

"This is a pretty business, Ravensford."

"They mean to sink her?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But, Hayling, might we not protest?"

"We might; but it wouldn't be of the slightest use. They must sink the Chung Tong if they hope to escape detection. Who, then, is to know how she went down? Indeed, from their point of view, it is the only thing they can do. Protesting is useless. There are quite fifteen men forward, all fully armed."

"But, good heavens, we can't stand by and see this done!"

"We must—unless we want to go down with her. Much better live in the hope of bringing these scoundrels to book. See, she's under way at last," and he pointed to the bubbling water just under her counter; "but too late, I fear; too late."

Too late, indeed, for just then another shot rang out, and we knew that the helpless vessel had again been badly hit. Hayling's indifference sud-

denly gave way to a fierce outburst of passion. He ground his teeth and shook his huge fist in the direction of Mr. Gupp.

"I'll be even with that fellow yet," he hissed.

He turned from me and searched intently every point of the horizon. But coming back again he shook his head. "Nothing in sight, old man. It's all up with the Chung Tong."

It was horrible to stand there and watch the slow consummation of such a dastardly piece of work; more horrible still to feel one's inability to prevent it. Yet, as Hayling had truly said, protesting was useless; and if we had been rash enough to protest with force, it would have given Captain Macshiel a decent pretext for doing that which he had previously failed to accomplish.

But in the mean time the wildest excitement prevailed aboard the liner, which was now under full steam and steering almost due north. People rushed excitedly up and down her decks, while the crew lowered some sheets of canvas over the side, with the evident intention of plugging the hole. Indeed, one man was swung over in a sling, and I saw that he held a long stick in his hand with which he kept forcing the canvas into the leak. He made a pretty target as he swung there clear of the ship; but I prayed inwardly that the rascals forward might not think as I thought, and that the brave fellow might succeed in his arduous task.

Alas! Just at that moment the sharp crack of a rifle rang out. For a second or so I hoped the man had not been hit; but suddenly he drew himself up and clutched his sling tightly, and as he did so the stick slipped from his hands. There was an immediate stir among the men who were watching him, and rapidly they began to haul him up. But, quick as they were, they were not quick enough. Ere he had been drawn little more than half way up the side his hands slipped, and with a splash he fell backwards into the sea. Our sharp stem nearly struck him as we came on in the wake of the Chung Tong, and looking over the side I saw his dead, white face whizz by.

But during all this time neither Mr. Gupp nor his gun had been idle, and the Chung Tong, though she gained on us at first, soon slackened down; for the water was making great headway upon her, and she was already rapidly sinking by the bows. Indeed, as we drew off and watched, we saw her stern gradually rise until her propeller stood almost clear of the water. Then the escape pipes were opened and the steam came up in a huge cloud, making a great roaring and hissing. But wise as was the act, it came too late. Almost before we knew what had happened there was a terrific explosion, and the Chung Tong was enveloped in smoke and steam. When they cleared away there was nothing left of the big liner but a lot of wreckage.

Hayling, who had stood beside me during the whole of this awful scene, here uttered a great cry, as of a beast mad with pain. Then with a fearful oath he bounded forward, I at his heels.

"Damn you!" he yelled, shaking his fist at the captain, who still stood on the bridge. "You shall pay for this, Macshiel!" He was about to swarm up the steps which led to the bridge when I seized him by the arm.

Turning on me savagely, I believe he would have struck me had I not swung him on one side.

Macshiel poked his ugly little face over the rail, and I saw that it was hideously livid with excitement.

"Take that fool below," he cried out sharply. "I'll speak to him presently."

But Hayling, who seemed half mad with horror and excitement, continued to say some extremely foolish things. I saw the captain's eyes harden, and judging his movements, guessed what was coming. Nor did I draw Hayling aside a moment too soon. The bullet, which spent itself in the deck a few yards away, would certainly have gone clean through him.

"For God's sake, Hayling," I implored, "come aft and try to contain yourself. You can do no good here, and they are in no mood to brook interference."

He looked at me, and a strange smile played in his eyes.

"I admit it, old man; I am an infernal fool. But I could have gone for an army then."

By this time we were well abreast of the engine room skylight, and consequently in no immediate danger from the captain, who, fortunately for us, had other work just then.

As the Pulo Way began to move slowly towards the wreckage, we saw that those who had not been carried down with her, or who had not been blown up, were clinging to the promiscuous bits of timber which were floating about. Some even had their life belts on, and as they bobbed up and down they frantically waved to us, and called for help in the most heart-rending fashion. I think I must have counted some eight or nine persons in the water, and I was beginning to wonder what Captain Macshiel would do with them, when I saw the two nearest us let go the spar to which they were clinging and begin to swim towards us. They were two white men, the young officer who had recognized Hayling being one; the other was a pale faced fellow, who looked like a fireman or a greaser.

On they came in gallant fashion, though encumbered with their clothes, until they were within some twenty yards of us, and I could already see the alternate flashes of hope and despair which swept their faces. Then of a sudden two shots rang out almost simultaneously. The pale faced man clapped his hand to his face, and the moment before he sank I saw the red blood trickle through his fingers. The young officer wildly threw up his arms, and half rose out of the water. As he did so he showed a crimson mark on his throat.

What followed was horrible beyond words. Shot after shot rang out, and one after another the poor wretches let go their hold and sank. Unable to bear the sight any longer, I turned away and hid my face in my hands. But though I might shut out the actual sight, I could not shut out the memory of it; and I knew not which was the harder to bear, the seeing or the imagination.

Hayling came across to me and dragged me back to the side, and, without speaking, pointed to an object which floated some little distance ahead.

What it was I could not at first make out, but just then the sun caught the golden hair.

"God Almighty!"

It was the girl—the girl with the white, scared face, who had watched us from the poop of the *Chung Tong*; and even as written here the exclamation escaped me.

"I'm going forward," said Hayling; and I knew that the man who shot at her would have to answer to the second mate. I, just as excited as he, bounded after him, and as I passed under the break of the bridge I heard Gupp yell out:

"Don't shoot at her! She's alive!"

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#### CHAPTER IX.—OUR LADY OF THE SEA.

THE captain perked up his ears and grinned unpleasantly, but he never countermanded the order.

"Starboard a little, sir," cried Gupp, who seemed to be greatly excited. "Steady! Now we'll soon have her aboard."

Slowly, at a snail's pace, the great ship crept up to the little bit of unconscious life incased in its huge cork belt. Her beautiful hair, like trailing seaweed, floated upon the water; her exquisite face was white and drawn with all the horror of death.

Gupp, who was hanging over the bows, a most surprising eagerness in his big face, once more yelled out the direction, and presently we saw the white face drift by our sharp cutwater. Then, as we slowly forged past, the man who had gone down over the side seized her, and in a few moments she was on deck.

Here I immediately pushed forward and took command, for I knew something of such things, having once seriously studied medicine. Strange to say, the men stood back without a murmur, while Hayling and I set to work to restore animation.

At first we were in some doubt as to her recovery, though I am pleased to say that doubt did not afflict us long. After a dose of brandy and sundry other little attentions, her bosom began to heave, and her breath came in quick, convulsive gasps. Then her eyes opened, and when she beheld the men about her I saw the indecision flicker across her face, and I knew for the moment that she doubted if she were really alive.

"It's all right," said Hayling softly, still continuing to stroke her hand. "You are quite safe and among friends."

But I knew by the way her eyes flew from one face to the other that she did not quite understand.

"Where is my father?" she said at last.

I could not answer, and so turned my face away from her imploring eyes—eyes that were deep and blue as the sea, and full of a pathos that made one quiver.

"I dare say he is well," said Hayling. "We shall see presently."

An odd, penetrating look came into her eyes. She looked at him intently.

"Who are you?" she gasped, sitting up with an effort.

"A friend," said he.

"I know!" she cried, a look of horror and loathing leaping into her face. "You are the thief who came in the boat. You are going to kill me!"

"No, no," he said gently; "you are with friends." Yet I knew that her words froze all the manhood in him.

But she would not be pacified.

"You are a bad man!" she cried. "Will no one save me?"

He turned rather pale, but after a momentary struggle with the lump in his throat, said:

"You must not talk any more now. Let me take you to your room."

"No, not with you," she cried, struggling violently. "I appeal to these gentlemen."

He got up with a sad, grave smile, and beckoned to me.

"Take her to my room," he whispered.

Gupp and I raised her, and between us we escorted her to Hayling's room, she directing towards him a parting glance of loathing and horror.

"Where are you taking me?" she said. "This is not the Chuug Tong?"

"No, miss," said Gupp.

"Then why am I here?"

Gupp explained. "The Chung Tong has sailed away, miss."

"Sailed away! Where am I? How did I come here?"

"Must have fallen overboard," said the man.

She looked hard at him in the same confused way. Then of a sudden her memory came back to her.

"I know," she cried. "You are the pirates!"

"Pray do not distress yourself," I said. "Some of us are what we could not help being. You shall hear the whole story when you are stronger. In the mean time try to believe that you are among those who will do their best to protect you."

Talking thus, I got her into Hayling's cabin, and seeing that she was well enough to be left alone, I told her what to do, and then withdrew, dragging Mr. Gupp with me.

"Lord," said he, "that's a girl!"

There was so much admiration in his voice that I had to swing round and look at him. As I did so his eyes met mine, and I thought he looked embarrassed.

"Yes; but she won't have you to thank for much."

"I don't see it. If it wasn't for me she wouldn't be alive now."

"She might have been better off."

"You don't understand gratitude," he snarled. "You must be taught."

Foreseeing the folly of a further quarrel with him, I merely shook my head and walked aft; for I knew that I was only allowed aboard on sufferance, and that my enemies would not neglect the first opportunity of sending me where they sent the Australian liner.

The ship was now going at full speed, and curiosity taking me into the wheelhouse aft, I saw by the compass that we were steering about due south, or in the direction whence the Chung Tong had come. Therefore, bidding good by to all thought of ever seeing Manila, I tried to bear myself with fortitude, to be prepared for any emergency, and to hope that in some inexplicable way things would right themselves. Wherever we went, the voyage for me would mean an unceasing vigil. Somehow I never hoped to see the end of it; but, nevertheless, I meant to proceed with the utmost caution in my speech and actions. Yet scarcely had I inwardly vowed this good resolution before I seemed bent on breaking it.

The captain, having set the course, came aft in company with the mate, and as he approached me he saluted ironically.

"Well," he sneered, "have you got over your qualms yet?"

"This is no affair of mine, Captain Macshiel."

"I think you'll find it is," he said. "You're one of us, whether you like it or not;" and, immensely tickled with the thought, he banged the mate playfully on the back.

"I am not one of you, nor will I touch one penny of the plunder."

He laughed again. "That's neither here nor there. If we swing, I'll take jolly good care that you keep us company."

"I think not," said I.

His eyes grew ugly, and he drew down his forehead like a monkey. I was a fool to cross him at such a moment, but the devil himself wouldn't have frightened me just then.

"You're with us or you're not," said he. Then he smiled malevolently. "Upon my soul, I don't know why I don't drop you over the side." But I saw his evil little eyes wander to the right hand pocket of my coat, and I guessed the reason.

"Well," grinned the mate, "he may as well be drowned as frightened to death."

"But I have hopes of him," replied Macshiel, with a meaning smile. Then changing his bantering tone, he said sharply, "Look here, they tell me you're a bit of a doctor."

"I have not qualified, though I have studied medicine."

"Then there's a man sick forward. Go and see what you can do for him."

There was, of course, nothing to do but to obey; and as, fortunately, the man was only suffering from a very mild distemper, I soon had him about. This gave me a sort of standing on board, and for a little while relieved me of the tyranny of those with whom I had the misfortune to sail.

In the mean time the ship, swinging steadily on her course, worked her way down the more open waters of the Sulu Sea. Hitherto the men had gone secretly about the decks, as though living beneath the shadow of their awful crime; but once the scene of the outrage was left far behind, and the ship stole further and further into the open sea, the spirits of those on board seemed to improve. There was much free drinking among the officers and crew, the latter frequently finding their way aft and loitering about in a man-

ner that set all discipline at defiance. Whenever the captain appeared he made a great pretense of bundling them forward, but it was done in a way which they were not likely to resent.

During this time I saw little of Hayling, who still continued to discharge the duties of second mate. We knew that we were objects of suspicion, and while under the present régime thought it wiser to adopt a policy of the utmost circumspection.

But of the solitary survivor of the *Chung Tong* I saw a great deal. Indeed, acting as I did the part of a physician, which at first she really thought me, I was constantly brought in contact with her; and you may be sure I lost no time in letting her know the true position on board of *Hayling* and myself. The first night only, while her clothes were getting dried, she spent in his room. Then, after I had made certain representations to the captain, he placed one of the best cabins in the saloon at her disposal, and I will add that he treated her with the utmost consideration. Had she been a lady passenger of distinction, and he the courteous commander of a mail boat, he could not have behaved with greater tact or decorum. When she wanted to come up on deck, he darted below and brought up his own lounge chair; he produced half a dozen bottles of sweets, from which she could pick and choose; nor did he ever forget himself while she was within hearing. Indeed, by many a little act he sought in his own rough way to show her that he did not war on defenseless girls, though they might suffer in the change of things—which was nice of him, and showed that, bad as he was, he was not wholly inhuman.

As for the girl herself, it was some time before she had recovered sufficiently from the shock to be able to speak about herself or the past. Then her history proved but a brief one. She was an English girl—a Londoner, in fact—who had set out with her father, who was a retired banker, on a trip round the world. They had passed through the Continent to Egypt, and from Suez had gone on to Bombay and Colombo, whence they took ship to Australia. Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney had been visited in turn, and at the last named port they joined the *Chung Tong*. Their intention was to visit China and Japan, and thence cross to America, but, as we have seen, Captain Macshiel and his associates decided otherwise.

All this she told me as we sat together on the deck the first day of her convalescence, and though I spared her all unnecessary detail of our brutal attack, I pointed out that by no possibility could any but herself be alive. This I impressed upon her because she seemed to hug the delusion that her father had escaped. Indeed, she seemed to think that he could not possibly die, enjoying the most blind belief in the resource and intrepidity of fate. As though fate could keep a man afloat when he had no support but salt water!

But in her own quiet way she seemed a brave, determined sort of girl, and though the mention of her father's name always brought the tears to her eyes, she bore the novelty of her equivocal position with surprising equanimity. Towards the captain, who, as I have said, treated her with the utmost civility, she acted with commendable tact. Indeed, I will not say I did not



suggest this line of conduct, though she frequently surprised me by a unique display of ability in carrying it through. The mate never troubled her beyond "Good morning, miss," though Mr. Gupp displayed an ardor which under other circumstances might have been commendable. As for poor Hayling, she at first seemed to regard him as a most abandoned ruffian, and it necessitated a somewhat prolonged play of my persuasive powers to convince her to the contrary.

"I shall never forget how stern he looked as he sat in the boat," she cried, "or how sharply he spoke to poor Captain White."

"I saw you watching him."

"He fascinated me. I could not help thinking of the faces in the rock carvings we had seen in Egypt. You are sure he is not a wicked man?"

I could not help smiling at the ingenuous query.

"I know little of him, Miss Waltham"—for such was her name—"but from the little I do know there is no man in the world whom I would sooner trust."

"Perhaps I don't do him justice," she said. "I was horribly frightened, and he has such a strange, grim face. I am sure his ancestors must have come out of Egypt."

Just then the subject of our conversation came aft, and as he approached I saw her eyes fly to his face, and I noticed her mouth quiver. I beckoned him over and introduced him in the orthodox style—"Miss Waltham, this is our second officer, Mr. Hayling." Hayling raised his cap and looked decidedly uncomfortable, while the girl strove her hardest to atone for past misconduct. A few commonplace remarks, a few congratulatory words from him respecting her rescue and recovery, and then he went on his way. But I noticed that her eyes rarely left his face, and that when he went away they instinctively followed him.

"I think you may be right," she said. "Your friend's eyes are almost timid."

"He is not the bloodthirsty ruffian you imagined?" I inquired, with a smile.

"How could I have been so foolish? What does he think of me?"

"Everything that you could wish."

"But I called him such horrid names!"

"And what do you think he calls you?"

"Tell me."

"Our Lady of the Sea."

"Oh," she said, evidently much affected, "I am so sorry. I beg his pardon—a thousand times."

So that was all right. Having once looked fairly into Hayling's eyes, she had seen what ought to have been patent to the meanest intelligence—an honesty coupled with a most curious self dependence. Indeed, inside of twenty four hours she was to experience a sensation entirely new to her, and gather a few more impressions concerning the big Australian.

Thanks to the unexpected courtesy of Captain Macshiel, the girl's life was made as easy as circumstances would permit; but Macshiel, though

ostensibly the commander, had lost something of his power since he had openly taken to evil ways. This was quickly seen in the changed manner of the junior officers, and the way they hung about the afterdeck—not to mention an occasional excursion aft on the part of the more presumptuous of the men. More particularly was this noticeable in the behavior of the man Gupp. This fellow was an excellent specimen of the bully order; a big, browbeating, burly rascal, whom one could well imagine being discharged from the navy for misdemeanor of a very serious character.

Well, as he had taken a leading part in the attack on the *Chung Tong*, he was not the sort of man to give ground once his villainy had been carried to a successful issue. Of late I had frequently heard him lay down the law to Captain Macshiel, and being the bigger bully, he had carried things with a recklessness and a disdain of consequences not likely to engender love. He knew that Macshiel had given himself away, and he had not finesse enough to hide that knowledge. The result was that Jack soon became as good as his master; and if Mr. Gupp felt inclined to take his ease on the quarter deck, he accordingly took it. In fact, I was rapidly coming to the conclusion that the real master of the vessel was no less a person than the ex gunner.

It was therefore with a feeling of uneasiness that I beheld him succumbing to the witcheries of the girl; for I feared the wooing of Mr. Gupp would be attended with ill results. Still I must admit that he seemed to hold a different opinion, for he wooed like one inordinately vain or brutally callous. He seized every opportunity to obtrude his disagreeable presence on the girl, and even went so far as to caution me out of whatever affection I might be secretly nourishing. The man undoubtedly regarded himself as her savior, which belief had enough of truth in it to make him earnest. If her heart did not exactly melt with gratitude at the thought, his merits must, at least, have softened it.

He was a brute, but a brute with a following at his back, and though my inclination sounded a war note, my better sense prevailed. After all, it was just as easy for him to fall in love as it was for me; and who was I that I should resent his subjection to the gentle passion? Perhaps I thought "gentle passion" not quite the right phrase; perhaps, also, his presumption irritated me a little.

It all happened on the day after Hayling's formal introduction. I was below at the time, though I heard all about it after. Hayling, who was keeping his watch, saw Gupp come up from below and immediately seat himself beside the girl on one of the seats aft. A few words passed; but when she tried to rise, the gunner held her down. A sharp scuffle followed; she got clear, and bounded forward. After her he came, and caught her about midships. Then his arms went round her, and despite her struggles he drew her close to him.

Hayling waited no longer than to make sure the girl resented this familiarity. Quick as thought he darted from the bridge, and, like the kangaroo of his native land, he bounded aft. Before Mr. Gupp realized what was happening, he received a blow on the side of the head which brought him

clattering to his knees. Hayling at once took the girl's hand and led her towards the companion, while she looked up into his hard, rough face, her eyes full of tears.

"Thank you, Mr. Hayling."

He had been called Mr. Hayling often enough before, but never in such a way. The soft little hand nestling into his made it tingle.

"I am sorry for your sake that you should have occasion to thank me."

He stopped at the door and let her pass in. She stole a fearful look forward and then shuddered.

"That horrid man is coming."

A quick glance was enough for Hayling.

"You may go below without fear. He shall not follow you."

"But you?"

"Oh, I'm all right," said he, with one of his odd laughs.

"You will be careful?"

"I promise you."

He turned and faced the scowling Gupp, who still held his head as though he had a buzzing in his ears. But if he had been drinking before the blow, the drunkenness had been knocked out of him. He advanced stealthily, head down, eyes peering up through bushy brows; then suddenly, without a word of warning, he drew his sheath knife and rushed upon the Australian. But Hayling had been taking in every movement, and with a quick spring he caught the man by the wrist and jerked the knife from his grasp. At this moment the captain and I appeared, for we had seen Miss Waltham in the saloon, and she had sobbed out the state of things.

As soon as the knife clattered harmlessly to the deck, Hayling closed with his opponent, and as the men locked their arms round each other a fearful struggle began. Gupp was heavier, and, perhaps, in a rough way, a bit more powerful, but the Australian had strong arms and quick feet, and a back that seemed to bend and right itself like steel.

They swayed from side to side, now against the deck house, now against the bulwarks, over which the gunner tried his hardest to force his adversary. But though by a superhuman effort he once raised Hayling off his feet, that agile one was down on them again long before the onlooker was aware of it. And so the fierce struggling and panting went on, till, with a quick backward movement, Hayling broke from his opponent's hold, and as he did so he sent his fist crashing into Gupp's face.

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#### CHAPTER X.—A CAUSE OF ALARM.

It was a wonderfully quick bit of work, and, taking the gunner by surprise, seemed to daze him. He went flying backwards, his huge arms swinging in the air, till the bulwarks brought him up with a crash. As he clattered clumsily to the deck the blood spurted freely from his nose.

I was about to step forward to interfere, when the captain laid his hand on my arm, and with a look cautioned a policy of non intervention. It was the first inkling I had that all was not well between the captain and his

gunner. My hopes leaped freshly. There was undreamed of possibility in that look.

Hayling here turned and gravely saluted the captain.

"I beg your pardon, sir——" he began.

But the old man cut him short.

"Never mind that now. Take care of yourself."

Gupp here arose, presenting a most unpleasant sight. Very formidable he looked, and very vicious. All the bad blood in him being at fever heat, he rushed straight at Hayling, swearing hideously the while. But the second mate, who, on occasion, could curse a bit himself, was not to be daunted by a furious explosion of expletives, nor cowed by passion, however hideously distorted. He immediately threw himself into position, and as Gupp rushed in at him he suddenly shot out his long left arm, and in a twinkling the gunner was staggering back almost as quickly as he had come. For Hayling's long left had struck him above the eyes, and for the moment Mr. Gupp could not have been sure if his skull still retained its roof.

When he advanced again it was much more cautiously. An ugly smile played round the lower part of Hayling's mouth. Each showed his love for the other in a truly horrible fashion. They had been longing for such an opportunity—at least, I knew Hayling had—and now it had come.

There was an attempted display of science on the part of Mr. Gupp. He put up his hands in the orthodox fashion and shuffled about, now making a pretense of hitting, and now jumping back; while all the time the Australian watched him with the same awful look—a look which I have called a smile, but which might better be described as a hideous scowl. As Gupp circled round him he duly shifted his feet, but he never advanced or retreated a step. If the gunner ventured too near, Hayling's whole frame seemed to bristle—a sign the worthy Gupp never failed to note or to respect.

Then almost before one seemed to realize what was happening, the two men closed, and a most ferocious bout of punching ensued. Hayling at first strove hard to shake himself free, a proceeding which his opponent strove equally as hard to frustrate. There was no doubt that the safeguard of the one was the danger of the other; for Hayling, who had much the better science, had everything to lose by infighting. This Gupp soon realized, and once he had closed with the Australian he took every advantage of his weight and muscle.

The way they slogged each other was something awful to witness, and for the life of me I could not tell who was getting the better of the engagement, till, falling on the deck, the men seemed to break of their own accord. Then, with a speed almost incredible in two such big men, they were on their feet again in an instant. Scarcely staying to breathe, they flew at each other, or, rather, it was Hayling who attacked this time, and in such a way as left little doubt of his intention. The shock of the two meeting was extremely painful to witness. The thought of what it must have been like personally to experience makes one shudder. Gupp at once gave way, and Hayling, following him up, beat him so unmercifully that he soon had the big fellow stretched helpless on the deck.

By this time quite a considerable crowd had assembled, and while some began to murmur threateningly at the second mate, others took up the gunner and carried him below.

"It was a fair fight, lads," cried Captain Macshiel, "and the best man won."

This seemed to appease the majority, though some there were who recognized in Gupp a possible leader, and who plainly resented this treatment of their chief. But Macshiel had spoken, and as yet he was their commander.

Turning round, I saw the girl standing by the companion. Her face was horribly white, and she looked so like fainting that I ran across to her.

"I thought you were below."

"I couldn't stay—I couldn't!" she gasped.

"Then you have seen——"

"All;" and her head drooped forward and her lips quivered.

"Well, well, let me take you below now. You look as though you were going to faint."

"But I'm not," she said firmly. "I never fainted in my life. It's horrible, that's all. Tell Mr. Hayling to come here."

I immediately called to him, for he, seeing with whom I was speaking, had begun to sneak forward in a way that did not become such a worthy knight. But my voice cut short his retreat, and seeing me beckon, he approached awkwardly, as if ashamed of himself, surreptitiously wiping the blood from his face.

A curiously rough and ruffled appearance he presented as he stood before her. He had a contusion over the right eye, which did not add to his beauty, while the blood had stained the corners of his mouth, the under lip of which was already much swollen. Yet, in spite of it all, there was something about him unmistakably manly and attractive. I wanted to grip his hand, or sling my arm through his. Had I been a woman, I think I would have flung my arms around his neck and had a good cry.

But our Lady of the Sea did nothing of the kind. She held out her little white hand, and she took his big, brown paw, bruised and bloody as it was; and I saw him tremble and look sheepish, and almost drag his hand away.

"Mr. Hayling," she said, and her sweet voice was full of the most delightful tenderness, while her sweet eyes glistened with tears, "I am sorry that through me you should have been led into this brawl; but I thank you sincerely for coming to the aid of a defenseless girl."

"I am sorry for your sake that my aid was necessary," he replied; "but it's always yours when you want it."

"Thank you."

But the deep fringe quivered and drooped, for Hayling was now looking at her in a way that would try a much older woman. Nothing more was said just then, the captain coming up and apologizing for the brutal behavior of his third mate.

While this was going on Hayling stole away, and a few minutes after I

joined him in his room, where I found him washing his face and generally attending to his bruises, which, fortunately, were not of a very serious nature. But he did not hide from me the fact that his mind was extremely ill at ease, and that he believed his life would now be doubly insecure. Gupp was sure to seek some method of revenge, and as he was not likely to fancy another personal encounter at fisticuffs, he would assuredly discover some way which produced but a minimum of danger to himself.

Well, there was nothing for it but extreme caution, and I pleaded earnestly on behalf of that most admirable of all qualities. He laughed, and promised all sorts of things, but there was a recklessness about him which betrayed an utter indifference to the way things went—a mood with which I could easily have quarreled.

I saw no more of him nor of Gupp that day, though I learned that the latter, with the exception of some personal disfigurement, was not much the worse for the encounter. For this I was heartily sorry. A forced stay of a few days on his back might have put him in a more Christian frame of mind. Of Miss Waltham I saw nothing. She, like a wise girl, had kept to her room, and very early that night I sought the seclusion of my own. There were too many people aboard the Pulo Way, too many queer things done, for the dark decks to offer any particular attraction.

I thought the long night would never pass. At every sudden sound I started, and whenever I heard a voice outside in the saloon I waited anxiously for the expected knock at my door. But the morning came at last, and I jumped from my bunk wondering what the new day would bring forth.

I learned from the steward, who served me with my breakfast, that Miss Waltham had not yet arisen, so to make sure that she was all right I went to her room and knocked. Yes, she was well enough, with the exception of a bad headache. To her knowledge no one had molested her. She did not think she would get up for an hour or so.

Above deck the day was brilliantly fine, though the heat became intensely oppressive as we drew near the equator. I lounged about as usual, wishing I had something more conventional to occupy my mind than imaginary attacks from sundry ill conditioned rovers of the deep. Imagination, and the constant state of alertness to which my invidious position subjected me, were not conducive to that unemotional, if somewhat enervating, existence which I had hitherto enjoyed. Some might welcome the change; I didn't.

Prompted by pressing instinct, I then went forward to call on my friend Hayling; but to my repeated assaults upon his door I received no reply. I turned the handle, but the door was locked. Then I went still further forward, hoping he might be about the deck; but the only persons I saw were the mate, who was apparently keeping somebody else's watch, and the man at the wheel.

I waved my hand to Murrell, who looked as ugly and surly as only a man can look who has gone to bed drunk, and who has been somewhat uncereimoniously awakened out of his drunken sleep. He came to the rail of the bridge, and, looking over, leered at me.

"This is a nice mess!" he began.

"What has happened now?"

"Don't you know?"

I was not certain whether the fellow's grin was one of anger or delight.

"I know nothing."

"Then, of course, you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?"

"That the second mate can't be found."

"Can't be found?" I echoed.

"Can't be found anywhere," said the man, with an exasperating smile.

"He was called to take his watch as usual. The man at the wheel says the second mate walked up and down for about an hour, and then went below. He did not come back, so we can only suppose that he fell overboard or committed suicide. Any way, it's beastly rough on me, and I only wish the brute had been more considerate."

I turned away with the sickest feeling upon me that I had ever experienced. In this I seemed to see the beginning of the end, and in my impotence I did nothing but anathematize the Pulo Way and all her abominable crew. That Hayling had either fallen overboard or committed suicide was a belief I did not entertain for a moment. I knew it could not be. He was not stupid enough for the one, nor cowardly enough for the other. That he had gone might be true; but if so, some one had given him a helping hand.

The rest of that morning I hung about the decks a prey to some distressing emotions. That Hayling had been done away with I did not doubt, and I wondered when my turn would come.

Miss Waltham did not appear on deck till well on in the afternoon, and then to my chagrin I found that Macshiel was her attendant cavalier. Several turns they took up and down together, I watching them eagerly; for I had begun to think some strange things concerning the captain. But as soon as the girl made for the benchaft and seated herself, I went round to them and began to chat away as though oblivious of the fact that Captain Macshiel twisted his scraggy neck whiskers with an exaggerated motion.

"By the way, captain," said I, "this is awful news about the second mate."

The old man scowled; but the girl started forward, an anxious look in her face.

"The second mate—that is Mr. Hayling?"

"Yes."

"What has become of him?" She grew perceptibly whiter as she put the question.

"Have you not heard?"

"Nothing."

I looked at the captain, and a curious shade played up and down his cadaverous jaws; but whether it was annoyance at my blundering, or a certain indefinable shamefacedness, I could not say.

"Very sad," said he, in his most unctuous manner—"very sad, indeed, and singularly unaccountable."

"What is very sad?" asked the girl.

"This about the second mate—he's missing."

"Missing?" she echoed, the scare passing as plainly over her face as a cloud crossing the sun.

"Yes. He can't be found anywhere. We are wondering whether he fell overboard or committed suicide."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the girl. "He could not."

"I admit," said Macshiel, with a queer smile, "that I would not have thought him capable of one or the other; but how else are we to account for his disappearance?"

"Have you asked Mr. Gupp?" I ventured.

He turned on me suddenly. A nasty glitter leaped from his sunken eyes.

"Do you know," said he, "I rather fancy you think we are not possessed of a single redeeming feature, as though from one act you could deduce a man's character. Mr. Gupp has lately suffered too much at the hands of the second mate to care about confronting him again. I myself have questioned Gupp very carefully, and I don't believe the poor beggar has left his bed since the fight. I admit the sadness of it," he continued affectedly, "and also, from my point of view, the inconvenience. As it is, we have none too many efficient officers on board."

From such a generous tribute we could not dissent. Captain Macshiel may have been privy to the mystery, or he may not have been; though from the nature of the man it was always difficult to tell the real feelings which animated him. The girl, whose eyes were full of anxiety, shook her head and gazed wistfully out across the sea; while for want of something better to do I filled my pipe and otherwise trifled with the subject. Yet no sooner had Captain Macshiel left us than the girl's eyes sought mine with a truth compelling look.

"I don't for one moment believe that Hayling either fell overboard or committed suicide," I said, replying to that look. "He was not stupid enough for the one, and there was no immediate reason for the other. Besides, he was not the man to shuffle out of a trouble."

"I don't believe he was," she replied. "And yet—if not——"

"He has many enemies on board, and one in particular. If he were surprised, the rest could easily be done."

"The rest?" she gasped.

"I fear we can only put one construction on his disappearance. Poor Hayling must be quite a hundred miles astern by this."

She did not answer; but as I looked into her face I saw it grow white as death. Fearing to speak, I turned about and fumbled for a match, and just then I beheld the sea through a strange mist.

"Poor fellow!" she said. "I wonder whose turn it will be next?"

I hadn't much doubt myself, but seeing her so distressed I tried to make the best of matters. It would be time enough to weep when the blow descended.

Then we walked slowly up and down between the main hatch and the



wheelhouse, and gradually her maidenly reserve thawed, and she spoke in a way of the big Australian which convinced me of the impression he had made upon her. Not that she actually said as much, or wished to imply as much, but the admiration of the woman for the strong man was so apparent that I would have been exceedingly dense had I failed to perceive the drift of her inclinations.

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#### CHAPTER XI.—THE USES OF TELEGRAPHY.

I ESCORTED her to the companionway, when she expressed the wish to go below, and though for hours after I hung about the deck, I saw her no more that day. The ship still plodded on her southerly course, the slow, rhythmic beat of the engines being the only companionship I had—that and my thoughts. The latter I could very well have done without, but they had no intention of forsaking me. Fortunately, as far as my person was concerned, I remained unmolested, but I lived in a horrid state of expectancy. Indeed, at times I almost wished that something would happen, so that my mind might be relieved of its fearful anxiety; but, as if to thwart me even in this, I was left severely alone. Perhaps my fellow voyagers reckoned the doing away of Hayling quite enough excitement for the present.

That night passed as uneventfully as the others, and I awoke with a new feeling of security. True, I had not forgotten Hayling's fate; but the conviction that I was to live was forcing itself upon me—for no reason, as far as I could see, but an absurd optimism. Perhaps I judged my companions by the light of my own spirit.

On deck there was the same awful loneliness of which I have so often remarked, and which was rapidly becoming a part of me, or I of it. The smoke was stealing up through the funnel in a thin, transparent haze; the screw ground its way through the water astern. Now and again a smooth wave broke and fell back from us with a low, monotonous roar.

I was glad when our sweet Lady of the Sea stepped out of the companion and came towards me. It was odd, but at the sight of her there was no more loneliness. And if her face was just a trifle pale, wasn't it as sweet a face as a man could wish to look on?

To my inquiry as to the state of her health she smiled rather wearily, I thought, and explained that she had not enjoyed a very good night, as her rest had been disturbed by the pertinacity of sundry ill-mannered rats.

"Rats!" I echoed; for with all her faults the Pulo Way was as free of those vermin as one would expect to find the best regulated ship.

"Yes, rats," said she; "and I never heard such a villainously systematic knocking and scraping in all my life."

"That's unfortunate," said I, smiling gravely, for she was much in earnest. "I will speak to the captain, and see if he can do anything for you. Your cabin must be over the storeroom."

"Then why don't the creatures eat the stores and leave my floor alone?"

"I don't think they can possibly eat your floor, because between it and them there is an iron deck."

"But may they not get between the iron deck and the floor? If they were to come through, Mr. Ravensford, I believe I should die of fright."

"If you will allow me, I will examine the floor when you go below."

I could not help smiling as I thought of any one on the Pulo Way being frightened of a rat. But I knew how women detest all such vermin; and as she descanted on the extraordinary behavior of these particular rodents, I listened with all the gravity such a recital warranted. And truly, if her terror had not lent wings to her imagination, those rats had certain powers which proved them to be no ordinary rodents. Indeed, she went so far as to declare that they actually signaled to each other in a horribly human manner, the result of which caused her some quaking moments during the long watches of the night.

Then from rats we began to talk about our prospects and the disappearance of Hayling. Of course, I told her that I had no further information to impart; at the same time I thought it would have been a cruel kindness to let her hope. Hayling had assuredly gone to that place which every good sailor most cordially loathes—the bottom of the sea. From the romantic point of view it may be an appropriate place for him; but be sure the romance of the thing never appeals to his imagination.

I hope I am not sentimental—at least, not sentimental in its worst sense; but I would give much to know that some one will speak as kindly of me as she did of the dead and gone Hayling. It may be a weakness of mine, and perhaps I ought to be ashamed of it, but candidly I am not; and what is more, I don't think much of a man who hasn't a weakness of some sort.

When at last she intimated her intention of going below, I rose and accompanied her, wishing at once to make my promised investigation. But though I searched every corner of the floor assiduously, I could discover no hole which would give ingress to a rat.

She watched me with a comical expression of nervousness, and after I had duly examined the four corners, informed me that the knocking did not come from the corners at all, but from the middle of the floor. I smiled inwardly as I proceeded to examine that particular portion of the cabin, for I knew now that her imagination had been tricking her. Still, to gratify her, I pulled up the strip of carpet that ran down the middle of the floor, and discovered—nothing.

I looked at her and smiled, and she smiled back in a serious sort of way, which showed that she was not yet convinced. So down on my knees I went, and carefully examined each seam, even going so far as to rap loudly with my knuckles. Nor did I content myself with this, for I went all over the floor, kicking with the heel of my boot, listening intently for the expected hollow sound. But nothing coming of it, I rose without speaking, and smiled faintly, not wishing to hurt her feelings.

And still I saw that she was not satisfied, for she kept repeating, "Strange," "I assure you I was not dreaming;" and then "Strange," again, and "Most unaccountable." I inquired if she still wished to move, and if I should ask the captain; but she blushed a little, and said that, though she liked to know the meaning of a thing, she was not quite the coward I seemed

to imagine her. Now, as I would have spurned such a detestable thought, I made haste to let her know how much she had misjudged me, and several very conciliatory speeches I had to utter to assure her of my sincerity.

I left her with a vague, incredulous smile on her face, and having passed through the saloon, was just about to mount the companionway, when I heard some one cry "Hist!" Turning round, I saw the girl standing at her cabin door, a singular look of wonder and alarm on her face. As her eyes met mine she beckoned to me.

Instantly I was by her side, when, without speaking, she turned and pointed at the cabin floor. Guessing in a moment what had happened, I stooped low over the carpet, when I distinctly heard a soft rat tat beneath.

I looked at her and saw the triumph in her eyes. Then, whipping off the carpet, I laid my ear to the boards, and sure enough a great rapping and scraping was going on below.

"You are right," said I. "The rats have certainly got in between the two decks."

"Now you can understand my terror?"

"Perfectly."

Just then, if anything, the noise grew louder, though it no longer resembled the scratching or gnawing of rats, but had resolved itself into a succession of sharp knocks. At first, I confess, I was fairly startled; for the knocking appeared extremely systematic, and came at regular intervals. Certainly no mundane rat had ever achieved such a remarkable triumph, and for the moment I thought that either I or the girl was an unconscious medium, and that the rapping emanated from some disembodied spirit. But being ignorant of spiritualism, and consequently a disbeliever, I immediately connected the rapping with the engines; for in any other way such a regular beating was certainly unaccountable.

Then, hardly knowing why, I rapped loudly in answer, and after waiting a moment or two up came the regular beat, beat, as before. When it stopped I rapped again, and to my surprise—I might almost say to my horror—up came a succession of precisely similar sounds.

It was curious, but the knocking was reminiscent—painfully reminiscent. Blurred visions of days gone by came crowding upon me, and with a cry I bounded to my feet. What I had heard was nothing more nor less than what any one can hear who steps into a telegraph office while a message is being received or despatched. Who has not heard the click, click, of the apparatus as it ticks off the letters? And who has not marveled at the wonderful invention? The uninitiated hears the clicking, and he may know that dots and dashes are imprinted upon the tape, which the operator reads as easily as print; but he may not know that the skilled operator can read the message simply by the sound.

Now, telegraphy was one of the many pursuits which I had followed keenly for a time, and though I was rather rusty in my subject, I knew in a moment it was somebody asking who I was. It was a clear, distinct message, and came thus:

Dot, dash, dash; four dots; three dashes; two dots; three dots; one

dash ; four dots ; one dot ; dot, dash, dot ; and one dot ; all of which, when put in telegraphic code form, would appear thus :

— . — . . . . — . . . . — . . . . — . . . . — . . . .  
This turned into English would read, "Who is there?"

I puzzled a while to remember my alphabet, and then I slowly rapped out the question, "Who are you?"

I put my ear down low to the floor and waited anxiously, though the blood surged to my brain, and every pulse of my body was athrob.

Slowly came the reply in somewhat uncertain rappings :

— . . . . — . . . . — . . . . — . . . . — . . . .  
This being translated gave the word "Hayling."

I sprang to my feet, and in my excitement seized Miss Waltham somewhat roughly by the wrists.

"He's alive!" I cried. "He's alive!"

Her face was full of wonder, her eyes burning with excitement ; but she managed to gasp out, "Who is alive?"

"Hayling!"

"Hayling! How do you know?"

"He has just sent me a telegram."

The wonder deepened in her great eyes, but she said nothing ; though I believe she thought for the moment that I had gone mad.

I quickly explained the apparently unexplainable, telling her how Hayling and I had once discussed this very science of telegraphy. Then dropping on my knees again, he and I carried on the following conversation in a more or less imperfect manner :

Ravensford : "Are you well?"

Hayling : "Starving."

Ravensford : "Who did it?"

Hayling : "Gupp and the mate."

Ravensford : "Does the captain know?"

Hayling : "Yes."

Ravensford : "Whereabouts are you?"

Hayling : "I cannot see ; but I imagine somewhere near the bulkhead of the storeroom."

Ravensford : "How can we best help you?"

Hayling : "By breaking into the storeroom and forcing the bulkhead."

Ravensford : "Courage. We will do our best."

Hayling : "All right."

After all, words are but a poor medium for the transcription of human emotions, though some people use them marvelously well. How ill these few bald phrases represent the intensity of feeling or imagination which was mine, the maddening anxiety which was hers, or the hope which was his!

I was conscious that the girl was standing well within the cabin ; but until I turned round to look at her I was totally unaware of the presence of Captain Macshiel. Yet there he stood lounging in the doorway, an amused and curious smile on his dry, quizzing face. I rose hastily, forgetful of the fact that I had been caught napping. The smile deepened round his eyes.

"Well," said he, "what are you doing there? Saying your prayers?"

"No; listening to the rats."

"Rats, eh? Do you think they understand the signal?"

"I think so."

"Much good may it do them."

"They are intelligent rats," I said.

He smiled. "But powerless." Then, turning to the girl, he said, "I am sorry that you should be disturbed in this manner. I must see if I cannot get you another room."

"You are very good, Captain Macshiel."

His eyebrows came down with a jerk; he started as though he had been stung. Then an ugly, suspicious look swept suddenly into his face. I sometimes thought the man was not wholly bad, though he was bad enough to resent any imputation of goodness. What had he done for her that she should call him good? And yet I knew he would have liked to hug the delusion that she believed in him, only, having some sense of the fitness of things, he dared not. Therefore his brows beetled, and his parrot beak took unto itself an ugly curve. The knowledge of what he was made him angry with what he could not be.

Just then, as if further to increase the awkwardness of the situation, the rapping below recommenced. The captain looked at me, and a cold, shivery sort of smile played round his hollow eyes.

"Most remarkable rats," he said. "Upon my soul, I must let the cat loose in the storeroom."

I followed him out into the saloon, giving the girl a reassuring squeeze of the hand as I went. He stopped when he saw me, and looked me up and down in a quizzing, impertinent way.

"Captain!"

"Well?"

"May I have a word or two with you?"

"A dozen if you like. Come this way."

He led me into his room, which was on the other side of the saloon, and pointing to a settee, bade me be seated. He himself lounged against his bunk, stuck his hands in his pockets, and surveyed me with an easy, insolent smile.

"Of course you know the meaning of that knocking?" I began.

"Of course. As I said, I will not have Miss Waltham disturbed. The cat shall be sent below."

"But why not give the rat a chance to come out?"

"Because a rat is a most ungrateful bit of vermin, and has absolutely no conscience."

"Tell me, Captain Macshiel," said I, "what has Hayling done that you should allow him to be treated in this fashion?"

"Hayling!" he echoed, simulating wonder. "Why, he fell overboard two days ago!"

"You know very well that he did nothing of the kind."

"Look here," said he, a deep scowl knotting his ugly eyebrows, "you

have a decidedly aggressive way about you—a way I don't like. Why the deuce can't you mind your own business, and not pit yourself against me on every possible occasion?"

"I hope I am not such a fool as to pit myself against you," said I. "The unfortunate thing is that our interests always seem to clash."

"You are indeed a fool if you let your interests clash with mine. You must know who is master, and that what the master wishes is law."

"That is just it," I answered, with a meaning drawl. "Who *is* the master?"

At this his eyes burned keenly, and he rubbed his neck whiskers sharply—a habit of his which was anything but pleasant to watch. In some vague way it seemed to remind one of the noose and the white cap.

"You ought to have known by this time that there is only one master aboard this vessel."

"Then why did Gupp and the mate take it upon themselves to put Hayling away?"

"Look here," he said, anger and curiosity streaking his face with ominous lines; "I am the man to ask questions. Hayling was put away for a good cause, and there he'll stay."

I could see he knew what was passing in my mind, and no man who has once been in authority likes to feel that authority slipping from him. Rather than I should think such a thing, he was even willing to apologize for the insubordinate Gupp.

"But what has he done that you should put him below and starve him?"

"Who told you that yarn?"

"He did."

He laughed incredulously.

"Rot! But understand, this is my affair."

"And mine."

He laughed harshly.

"Yours! What has it to do with you?"

"Everything."

His grin became more unpleasant.

"Oh, very well. There's the key of the storeroom." And he pointed to a short brass key that hung on a hook above his bunk. "He's down there somewhere; go and force your way through the bulkhead and let him out."

"I intend to."

"I would if I were you," he sneered. "You look just the man who could do it."

It did not need this taunt to further my purpose. I had not entered into this argument with him without due consideration. Living, as I did, from day to day—almost from hour to hour—in an exasperating state of nervous uncertainty, I knew that I had nothing to gain from him and everything to lose. The security of four o'clock might change to imprisonment at five; and the sea was such a handy place to tip a fellow into. Therefore my mind was made up, and though I failed to win him over to my side I meant to go straight on.

"I am just the man who is going to try," I replied, in an excellent manner of coolness. "I must have that key, Captain Macshiel."

"Certainly," he grinned. "Anything else at the same time?"

"Simply that I wish you to remain quiet while I effect my friend's release."

"Oh, very well," said he, turning to open one of the short drawers of his locker. "Anything to oblige you. Wouldn't you like some of the men to lend a hand?"

Now, it may be taken for granted that I, knowing my man, had watched him closely, so that when I saw him turn to the locker I instinctively guessed for what reason. Therefore I laid my hand on his arm.

"I cannot allow you to open that locker, Captain Macshiel."

Under other conditions the surprise in his face might have been considered comical. Now it was the comicality of a grinning death's head.

"By God!" he sputtered, and almost before I was aware of it he flew at me. His thin, sinewy fingers curled themselves round my throat, and had I not flung myself back with an extraordinary jerk, fetching him, meanwhile, a smashing blow in the face, I verily believe he would have choked me. As it was I freed my neck of his clutch, and met his rush with some degree of judgment.

The tussle that followed was extremely sharp while it lasted, the fortunes of either varying with every moment; but as we fell together his head came in contact with the sharp point of the curved arm of the settee, and he rolled over on his face with a low moan.

A hasty examination showed me that though he bled somewhat profusely he was only stunned; so I lifted him on to his bunk, took down the key of the storeroom, went out, and locked him in.

*Carlton Dawe.*

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### THE FIRST KISS.

It took so long to say good by ;

The curtains were half drawn, and I—

For once I seemed to hesitate,

She looked so pleased to have me wait ;

And so we let the minutes fly.

The hours just then were all awry :

"'Tis early yet," I heard her sigh.

The clock responded—"It is late !"

It took so long.

Now there was no one near to spy

A maiden and her lover shy.

Ah, well ! I can't quite demonstrate

Just how her lips met mine. 'Twas fate !

Love's first, sweet kiss, and that is why

It took so long !

*Felix Carmen.*

## BY RIGHT OF SWORD.\*

A tale of Moscow, the Nihilists, and the Czar—The extraordinary experiences of an Englishman who assumes the name and obligations of a Russian army officer—Complications that bring the bold adventurer within shivering distance of Siberia, and the tactics which earn for him a notable nickname.

### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

HAMILTON TREGETHNER is an Englishman who has lived a great part of his life in Russia. Deceived by the woman he loves, he is about to go to St. Petersburg to offer himself for the field in the event of war with Turkey, hoping somebody will put a bullet through him, when at the Moscow railway station he is approached by a stranger, Olga Petrovitch, who takes him for her brother Alexis, to whom he bears a marvelous resemblance. This Alexis is a good for nothing roysterer, a lieutenant in the Russian army. He has become involved in a quarrel with Major Devinsky, who persecutes Olga with unwelcome attentions, and fearing to meet the major on the dueling field, is about to flee in disguise. Tregethner becomes interested in the case, and being reckless of what he does in any event, gives Alexis his passport as Hamilton Tregethner and decides to remain in Moscow as Alexis Petrovitch. He fights the duel with Devinsky, utterly routing him, but presently finds himself in a tangle because of a love affair his predecessor had with Paula Tueski, the wife of the chief of police. She is deceived, as are all other friends of the lieutenant, to say nothing of the Nihilists, with whom it turns out he has had dealings. The latter commission him to assassinate Paula Tueski's husband, but Paula kills him herself with Alexis' dagger, the hilt of which she holds in readiness to exhibit in case Alexis offends her.

Meantime Tregethner meets at a ball a beautiful and powerful princess, sister to Prince Bilbassoff, high in government service. The princess takes a great fancy to him, which she is at no pains to conceal, and the prince promises the lieutenant his sister's hand and great honors if he will consent to put out of the way a certain high dignitary, who, it is claimed, has insulted the princess. Realizing by now that he loves Olga, and that Olga loves him, Tregethner is in sore straits to know a way out, and in the height of his perplexities he is confronted by new trouble. Olga is arrested on the eve of taking her departure from Moscow. Tregethner goes to Prince Bilbassoff for help and tells him the whole story of his identity. "Let Olga Petrovitch go," he adds, "and you shall do as you will with me."

"I take your word," is the prince's reply. "Your identity will continue unknown. You remain a Russian."

### CHAPTER XXV.—COILS THAT NO MAN COULD BREAK.

THE most determined effort could not make me believe that I should ever again set eyes on the woman I loved after the parting that now confronted us. Nor could I prevent her seeing something of this.

She was, indeed, so quick to appreciate the meaning of what I told her that all the sweet pleasure and gladness she showed when welcoming me changed in a moment to sadness.

"I would ten thousand times rather not go," she said. "I do not care what they do to me. I have brought you into this, and it is me they should punish," she said more than once.

*This story began in the July issue of THE ARGOSY. The three back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 30 cents.*

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"But you can't do what this man wants, Olga," said I, with a smile to reassure her. "If you could he would probably let me go and hold on to you. If I couldn't, he would hold on to us both. But you must go for this reason: You must find Balestier and tell him to come here. He must stop making a fuss about Hamylton Tregethner, and just come on here and see me, and let us try together to find out some solution of the puzzle. But he must hold his tongue unless talking to the right pair of ears."

"I shall know no rest till I find him," replied Olga instantly. "And if I do not, I shall come back here. I will not leave like this."

I kissed her, but did not tell her that, so far as I was concerned, her return would be useless, for the cogent reason that I should not be alive. It was impossible that I could survive by many hours the imperial visit. This I kept from her, however, for the farewell was already more than sufficiently sad and trying; and I doubt if any consideration on earth would have induced her to leave if she had really known how imminent was my danger.

I talked much, indeed, of the help that Balestier might be able to render, and thus impressed on her strongly the need for her to find him, however long it might take her. This giving her a task, and connecting it with the work of helping me, kept her hope alive and tended to reconcile her to the parting, so that in the end she shook off much of her depression. I could see also that she was battling with her feelings, to distress me as little as possible with the evidence of her grief.

I loved her the more as I saw this, but the parting was such pain for us both that I was glad when it was over. I stood and watched the train steam out of the station, and saw her leaning from the carriage window to catch the last glimpse of me. And I was sad, indeed, as I turned away with a positively choking sense of loneliness such as I had never felt before in all my life.

The departure of my brave, dear little sister, clever witted counselor, and dearest companion, seemed to leave such a void in my life that, in the first hours which followed her departure, I mourned for her as one grieves for the dead. And in truth she was dead to me.

But the events of the day following left me little time for meditation. It was Sunday, and a day of brisk action. Early in the morning there were special regimental duties; and on my return to my rooms for breakfast I found waiting for me a stranger, whose card, given to my servant, described him as "J. J. Junker, *St. Petersburg Gazette*."

He rose at my entrance, bowed, and said in a very pleasant voice:

"Excuse a journalist's liberty in coming to you. I am the special correspondent of the *St. Petersburg Gazette*, and have come to do the Czar's visit, and I should very much like a word with you on the matter."

"I don't see where I can be of any help," I replied; "but if there's anything I can tell you, fire away. I've had a couple of hours' drill this morning, however, and I have to be on the parade ground in less than an hour, so you must excuse me if I have my breakfast while we chat. But perhaps you'll join me?"

"With the greatest pleasure;" and down he sat, and while the servant

was in the room for the first few minutes he chatted away like the bright and pleasant fellow he appeared to be. But as soon as my man had left the room his manner changed suddenly, and his voice took a direct, earnest tone that made me look at him in some astonishment.

"Don't have that fellow back again. Is it all acting, or don't you really recognize me? I knew you in a moment."

"Did you? Well, I certainly don't know you. I never met a journalist——" He broke in with a short laugh and waved his hand with a quick gesture of impatience as he stared at me hard. His manner annoyed me.

"Well, if you're not what you said you were, what the devil are you doing here? What do you want?" I felt like pitching him out of the place.

"Didn't you expect me?"

"Expect you? No; how should I?"

"Instructions were sent to prepare you."

"I can only say I haven't the ghost of a notion what you want."

"To complete the arrangements for tomorrow's glorious event;" and his face lighted with a momentary enthusiasm.

"How am I to know you?" I asked suspiciously.

"I am Gorvas Lassthum; and I saw you twelve months ago when the other plan was laid, as you will remember, and failed. Your memory is treacherous, my friend."

"There are some things I train it to forget," I answered equivocally.

I was in a fix. I guessed the man was a Nihilist agent, of course, and his air of self importance suggested that he was high up in the leadership. But, on the other hand, Moscow was at the moment swarming with spies of all kinds, and this might be one. I assumed an air of extreme caution, therefore, and after a flash of thought added: "And some that I prefer not to know at all. It pleases me now to hold that from my side you and I are strangers. You know me well? Say, then, just what you wish to say. I, on my side, don't know you, and prefer to say nothing."

"Good," he cried; and, reaching out, offered me his hand, and when I gave him mine he pressed it and said earnestly, "Would to Heaven we had more men like you—so ready in act and so cautious in word."

I bowed and made no other sign.

"You have the orders for the disposition of the troops tomorrow, and at the last minute the whole of them, or the most of them, will be changed. You yourself will be detailed to that part of the line which runs over the flat stretch by the river on the further side of the Vsatesk station. Guard it well, for a greater life than that of the emperor's depends on your vigilance—the life of the people."

As he said this, another of those little flashes of light that seemed to transform him from a pleasant man of the world into an enthusiast leaped into his eyes. A pause followed, in which I said nothing.

"Your orders will be to station your men at set distances on either side of the line—it being an easy place to guard—and you will have some three miles of the line under your command. It is good. Now, take thought.

At one point in about the center of your section the land dips, and the line is banked to a height of some ten feet for a length of about half a mile. At that spot there are four alder trees—three to the left of the line, and one to the right. These three form an irregular triangle, one side of which is much shorter than the others; if you follow the short line which those two trees make you will find they form a comparatively straight line with the fourth tree on the other side of the railway embankment. Do you follow me?"

He made a rough model on the table cloth, using some of the breakfast things for the purpose of showing the positions of the railway and the trees.

"No one can mistake that," I said.

"Well, you are to take up your post here—you yourself, I mean—here, in a dead straight line between these two trees"—demonstrating them on the table cloth—"for this is where there will be an accident. And now, pay close heed to this. You will go out by train, and when your men are paraded at the station they will be joined by five of ours. These will mingle with yours at the very last moment; and if any questions are asked they will produce the necessary authority. These five men you will arrange carefully to take the next five positions to you on your right hand. When the train leaves the line, they will instantly close round and guard the emperor's carriage, and you will see that nothing prevents them. That is all you have to do; and if you act discreetly you will run no risk. You will not fail. They know their duties and will do them, and still let no one come between them and their noble task. Five bolder men do not breathe in all Russia. Remember, they are to be stationed next to you on your right. You understand?"

"Every item."

"It is a great day for you, friend," he said.

"It is a great day for Russia," I returned; and soon after he left me.

I was filled with the most anxious doubt as to what course I ought to take to checkmate this horrible plot of which I was the most unwilling depositary, and was marked out as the forced agent.

During the whole day I was turning the problem over and over in my thoughts, and I could see no course that would be at all effective in thwarting the scheme without at the same time exposing myself to all the hazard of being punished as a Nihilist. I could, of course, tell the police or Prince Bilbassoff; but this meant a double danger for me. They would take measures to alter the arrangements as to the visit; the reason for this would have to be told to the Czar; it would certainly leak out to the Nihilists, and I should be a mark for their assassins at once. On the other hand, the story told by Paula Tieski would seem to have the corroboration which my acquaintance with Nihilist matters would give to it, and I should be in peril there.

One consideration there was that gave me some reassurance. I had already had the orders for the distribution of the troops, and I knew that I was to be miles away from those cursed alder trees at the moment when the Czar would be passing. I knew that if the plot went wrong in that main feature it would fail altogether.

The Nihilists were not such fools as to draw down on themselves all the sensational punishments which would inevitably follow the discovery of an organized attempt on the life of the Czar for the mere empty purpose of sending the imperial train off the line. Unless, therefore, they had some emissary so highly placed as to be in possession of the information long before any of us in Moscow knew about it, the whole machinery was likely to be stopped for the one flaw. And though I had had some proofs of the extraordinary accuracy of information they possessed, I could not believe their power would be such as this necessitated.

But in the afternoon, when, according to arrangement, I went again to see Prince Bilbassoff, startling news awaited me—news that roused again all these doubts and difficulties, and set them buzzing and rushing through my brain, threatening to muddle my wits altogether.

There was a distinct change in the manner of the prince's reception of me, and it pleased me to set this down to the fact that his opinion of me was raised by the knowledge that the black past of Alexis Petrovitch was mine only by adoption, and that in reality I had the clean antecedents of an English gentleman.

"I can't give you more than a few minutes," he said; "and I must therefore squeeze as much as possible into them. I have taken your suggestion, and have wired to London to find out about you. The result is what I am bound to say I hoped, and the consequences are, I am going to trust you."

"That's as you please," said I quietly.

"It does please me, because I don't want this duel to fall through. Now, you want some cause for fighting that will satisfy your honour. Will you fight this man if he insults you?"

"I'll fight any man who does that," I replied.

"Now, whose officer are you?"

"The Czar's while I am in Russia."

"Will you risk your life in his service?"

"My sword is absolutely at his command."

"If you should hear his majesty insulted in your presence would you face the man who did it?"

"As surely as effect follows cause."

"Then this man's whole life is an insult to the Czar."

"In what way?"

"He is a Nihilist to his finger tips. His presence near the throne is a standing menace to the emperor, his hand is ever raised to seek his majesty's life, and his whole life is that of a traitor who learns the highest secrets only to betray them to these enemies of God and the emperor."

"What proof have you?" I asked, in the profoundest astonishment. I began to see now how it was the most secret information leaked out.

"None, boy. Or do you think he would be where he is for an hour?"

"Then how do you know it?"

"If a secret is known to three people, two of whom you know to be as staunch as steel, and yet it gets out, how do you think it happens? If this

happens not only once, but two or three times, what do you think of the man? This man is a traitor; and as surely as there is a God in Heaven the crown is not firmly on my master's head while the man remains alive. Now, will you fight him?"

"The matter is a public, not personal one—Russian, not English. My sword is not a bravo's to be hired for that sort of work."

He swore a deep oath under his breath at this, and then changed it to a laugh with an ugly ring in it.

"If you mean to climb, my young cockerel, we must see more of your spurs and hear less of your scruples. Personal! Good heavens, what more do you want? Aren't you the emperor's own property? Isn't the Little Father in danger? Isn't that enough? Personal! Ugh! Well, is this personal enough for you? His highness has already done you the honor to pick you out for the favor of his ill will. This is a letter which, by one of those little accidents that sometimes happen in my office, has fallen into my hands. He is writing to an agent of his here in Moscow. Listen: 'There is a young lieutenant of the Moscow Infantry Regiment, named Petrovitch, about whom I want all possible information. He is a dishonorable scoundrel, I understand—a dicing, gambling, drinking fellow, who thinks he can crow and strut with impunity because he had the luck to beat a better man than himself in a duel, and the insolence to insult another officer—one of my friends—and then hide himself under official protection. I hear now that he is meditating another and a greater *coup*. I know much about him, but want you to get me as much more information as possible. Such swash-buckling knaves are a disgrace and danger to everything they touch. He is not to be trusted in anything, and all reasons make his overthrow necessary.'"

As he finished reading the extract, the prince paused, and lowering the letter, looked at me over the top. Then, without giving me time to answer, he continued:

"Your 'butcher Durescq' was this man's close friend and tool—doing his work for him. It was through this patron's influence that Durescq escaped being turned out of the army altogether. Now, you can see two things—why this man hates you, and how it was I heard of you. Is that personal enough, lieutenant?"

"By heavens, I should think it is," cried I, on fire with rage. "What does he dare to interfere with me for?" As I asked the question the reason flashed upon me as by inspiration. He had heard of my being associated with Prince Bilbassoff, and was afraid that, as I knew so much about Nihilism, I should get to learn of his connection therewith, and he thus deemed it best to have me put out of the way. He meant to have me "removed." When I looked up, the prince's keen, subtle eyes were fixed on me with calculating intentness.

"It is curious that this man should fix on you as the object of his resentment even though he is a Nihilist. Take care, my friend. I know you have inherited a Nihilist black cloak and dagger with your other undesirable possessions. Beware how you use them."

"I believe the real Alexis had dealings with them," I said.

"If this Tueski woman manages to let them understand the truth, then you will need the wariest wits in the world to avoid stumbling."

"You have maddened me," I cried impetuously, as if in the highest excitement. "Get me a meeting with that villain, and were he twenty times the swordsman he is, and covered in iron mail from head to foot, my sword should find a chink to let the life out of him. I am on fire."

Then I rushed away; for in truth I dared not stay to be any longer questioned about my relations with the Nihilists.

It all seemed clear to me now. They meant to use me for the horrible business of the following day, and then under some pretext get rid of me—murder me if necessary, or denounce me. This man held that I knew too much for his safety. All this was supposing, of course, that I escaped the danger of the plot itself.

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#### CHAPTER XXVI.—MY DECISION.

THE news I heard from Prince Bilbassoff wrought me to a higher pitch of excitement than anything that had ever happened in my life. I was in a very highly strung condition, and my nerves were no doubt greatly strained as the result of the stirring events of the previous few days. That may have rendered me unduly susceptible to this new development.

Be that as it may, I went out of the prince's presence filled with a spurring desire to kill the man who, as it seemed to me, was planning my ruin in this most treacherous manner.

The view I took was that this grand duke was moved by the double motive of personal anger, on the score of my affair with Alexandre Durescq, and of a feeling of insecurity on account of the knowledge I had of Nihilism. I knew too much to be trusted. The issues were so tremendous, the decision I had to make so full of moment, and the time for me to choose my course so short, that my wits had need to be at their sharpest.

I had out my horse and went for a hard gallop—one of the best prescriptions I know of to clear a tangled judgment. It acted now. As I rode at hot speed my thoughts began to settle, and then gradually a scheme occurred to me, wild, desperate, and hazardous at best, and fraught with fearful risks to others beside myself; but yet, if successful, offering me what I wanted above all—complete deliverance from the whole of my present difficulties.

My first thought in all was for myself. Not for the emperor, nor the army, nor Russia, nor any big interests—for myself and for my escape from the country whose most unwilling guest and compulsory servant I was. Had I been a Russian officer in reality I could have taken but one course—have disclosed the Nihilist plot, or so much of it as I knew, and thus have checkmated the whole fiendish business at once. Had I ever received any particular mark of favor at the hands of the government or the country, gratitude would have urged me to take the same course.

But I owed nothing to a soul in all Russia. Every one had tried to use me as a tool. The colonel of the regiment had begun by making use of my

quarrel with Durescq to humiliate Devinsky. The officers, almost without exception, had swaggered over me contemptuously until my skill as a swordsman showed them the price of contempt might be death. The Nihilists had first tried to assassinate me, and only when I had seemed to serve their ends with more daring and secrecy than any other man among them had they turned with a demand for more sacrifices; while this grand duke, apparently one of the chief of them, was even now planning to get rid of me. Prince Bilbassoff was in the same list, and without a doubt would have shut up both Olga and myself on Paula Tueski's accusation had he not wished to hire me as an assassin. Everywhere I turned it was the same.

What, then, did I owe to Russia, that I should think of any single consideration except my own safety and welfare?

The question which I asked myself, therefore, was whether I could plunge my hand into this seething caldron of intrigue and murder and pluck out my own safety.

A word from me would foil the whole Nihilist plot, and the Czar would make his entry into Moscow in due form and time. But how should I profit? Supposing the Nihilist calculations were correct, and I was appointed to the section of the line where the "accident" was to happen, I should have to contrive obstacles and make difficulties which would in all probability draw down on me the suspicions of the whole Nihilist crew. Add that element of suspicion to the feeling which the grand duke already entertained, and was inculcating into others, and what chance was there of my escaping either open ruin or assassination?

Assuming that I did escape even, what should I gain? I was tied to Russia by the word I had passed to the prince, and could not hope to be set free from it until I had either fought the grand duke, or until the prince was convinced that the duel was impossible. But as the duke looked on me as nothing less than a pestilential traitor to the Nihilist cause, how was it likely that he would consent to meet me? Even if we added the cause which the prince had suggested—the spurious betrothal to the princess—I should get no benefit. The grand duke would merely regard that as an additional reason for having me removed secretly from his path.

All this meant, therefore, that even if I thwarted the plot in this way I should be kept in Russia, and apart from Olga, until the grand duke consented to fight me; or, in other words, until his emissaries had convinced themselves that they could not manage to assassinate me. Nor was it probable that that conviction would come until they had made a series of unsuccessful efforts.

A pleasant prospect, truly!

On the other hand, if I did nothing, but allowed the infernal plot to be carried through and the emperor murdered, it would mean death to me—certain death. As the officer placed in charge of the section of the line where the deed would be done, who had allowed the murderers, disguised as soldiers, to mix with my troops; who had actually posted them at the very spot where the train was to be derailed; and who, above all, was already suspected of Nihilist intrigue, I was certain of conviction, even without the

grand duke's special animosity. Add that, however, and the result was as certain as that night alternates with day.

If I was to escape, therefore, it must be by a shrewd stroke dealt by myself alone, and for myself alone. And such a stroke it was that suggested itself in the course of that ride.

Briefly, it was to allow everything to go forward, right to the very supreme moment, and then by personal effort to save the emperor's life by my own hand in such a way as to draw the imperial attention directly on myself.

I thought I saw how it could be done; and when I turned my horse's head homeward I rode at a slower pace, meditating all the details of the plan with the closest attention. The Nihilists had told me enough to show me how to act, and my sense of fair play urged me to use the knowledge for my sole advantage, and without involving a single Nihilist in danger by open denunciation. I was a Nihilist against my will; and though I had been forced into the plot, I was altogether opposed to telling what had been told to me in this spirit of confidence. At the same time I was a Russian officer, almost equally against my own seeking, and so long as I preserved the emperor's life I need not regard other matters as a Russian officer would.

By the time I reached my rooms I had my plans shaped and my scheme developed, and my accustomed mood of calm, wary self possession had returned.

I changed my suit and went to the club. The place was crammed with the officers stationed in Moscow and their friends who had been sent into the city on special duty in connection with the Czar's visit on the following day. Every one was in the noisiest spirits. Good news had come of the prospects of war. All believed that on the next day the Little Father would make a ringing war speech that would render peace impossible; and many of the men were talking as though the sword had already leaped from the scabbard, and a million men, tramping warwards, were already driving the scared Turks before them like husks before the winnowing fan.

I lounged about the place, exchanging a word now and then with one or another of my acquaintances, and I saw some of the youngsters stop their war babble as I passed and whisper to their companions, and the latter would turn and look in my direction. I was fool enough to be pleased at these little indications of the changed feelings with which, in scarcely more than a month, I had made my fellow officers think and speak of "that devil, Alexis."

More than once I smiled to myself as I thought what a bombshell would be exploded in the room if they were all told the hazardous secret which filled my thoughts just at that moment.

The contact with the crowd helped in a way to strengthen the decision I had made. I was one against all these thousands; fighting by myself for my own hand against all these desperate odds, and with none to help me in a single detail.

When I reached my rooms I went at once to bed, knowing that every minute of rest had its value as a preparation for the work of the following day. I had made my resolution, formed my plans, thought out even the



details. I had gauged the risk and knew full well that the probabilities were all against my being alive on the following night.

But this at least was equally certain—if I lived and was free I would have won my way out of Russia.

These were the thoughts that filled me, and so occupied was I with them that it was not until I purposely put them away from me, in order to get to sleep, that I recalled how little I had thought of Olga during the whole of that eventful day.

She was in my thoughts when I fell asleep, however, and her face cheered me in my dreams.

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#### CHAPTER XXVII.—THE FOUR ALDER TREES.

I WAS up very early on the morning of the Czar's visit. We had a parade at six thirty to receive final instructions, and as I walked to the barracks I was in high spirits, buoyant, self confident, and alert—much as I had felt on the morning of my duel with Devinsky.

The morning air was very fresh and clear, and the sunlight fell everywhere upon flags, decorations, triumphal arches, and the rest of the festal preparations for the great holiday, to which workpeople were busy putting the final touches.

Everybody seemed in the highest spirits. Laughter and jest and a pleasant interchange of greetings rang in the air on all sides of me, and the whole city seemed to be already wreathed in smiles.

My brother officers came straggling up after I had reached the ground, and more than one of them showed abundant signs of the previous night's carouse, looking as though a couple more hours' sleep were sadly wanted. When the colonel came and we all fell in, there was a disappointment for me. My new plan was based on the correctness of the Nihilist information—that I should have the command of the troops guarding the section of the line where were four alder trees; and I reckoned confidently upon hearing from the colonel of the alteration in the original plans.

But no announcement of the sort was made. On the contrary, as soon as the troops had fallen in, the arrangements which had been announced on the previous day were repeated, and I found that, instead of being told off to take charge of the railway to the north of the city, I had to pass the whole day in guarding the western gate, and the road for some distance on either side of it. I was ordered to parade my men at eight o'clock and march straight to the place of guard.

I went home to breakfast, disappointed and disgusted. I didn't care a jot about missing the sightseeing; but I was angry that the plan on which I had now set my heart had failed; and that instead of being able to strike a vigorous blow for my own freedom I should have to pass the hours dawdling about doing nothing more than a sort of police work in keeping order among a crowd of gaping, staring, gawky, country yokels.

I was in an exceedingly ill temper, therefore, when I returned to the parade ground to start on my most unwelcome and unpalatable task.

But I found the whole place in complete confusion and uproar; and the first words I heard were that the whole plan of the day's work had been altered; that the troops had been changed and interchanged in a most perplexing manner; that regiments and companies and even odd files of men had been mixed up in the greatest apparent confusion; and that not one of the original commands remained unaltered.

I hurried to the colonel for my orders, and found him cursing volubly and with tremendous energy at the infinite confusion the alterations had caused. But he found me my orders readily—he was a splendid disciplinarian—and when I read them I marvelled indeed at the extraordinary exactness with which the Nihilists had been able to anticipate matters.

My command was changed to the guarding of the three mile stretch of line outside the Vsatesk station and commencing a thousand yards to the north of that point. I was to train out at once; post my men at twenty five yards' distance; and allow no one to approach the line for two hours before the coming of the imperial train and until half an hour after it had passed; the time of its passing being given confidentially as 2:45—two hours later than had been originally fixed for the actual arrival in Moscow. More than that, the men under my command were not to be drawn solely from my own regiment, but from no less than three others, all specified, who were to meet me at the station.

As I read these instructions I saw in them the influence of some one who must be both near to the throne and intimately acquainted with the whole Nihilist plot. The object of classing together under one command men taken suddenly from different regiments was a master stroke of treachery for this particular work. Apparently it prevented any collusion among any disaffected regiments, but in reality it opened the way for the five assassins to get into the ranks without the least suspicion; while the meeting at the railway station, probably urged as a necessity to save time at the moment when the plans had been all changed, must have been in fact designed solely for the purpose of the plot.

He who was secretly behind all this was no ordinary man. That was clear. And I saw that in pitting my wits against his, seeing that he already had the imperial ear, I should have to be wary indeed, if I wished to avoid a fall. But I did not shirk the contest, and now that I knew I was really to have the chance, I clenched my teeth in desperate resolve.

After incalculable trouble and much irritating delay, I got together the small company that came from my own regiment and marched them to the railway station, where I halted them and looked round for the detachments that were to join me. I posted my men in a place that would lend itself well to the Nihilist scheme. The three detachments of men reported soon after my arrival, each in charge of a sergeant; and when I had ascertained the train by which we were to travel—a matter of no small difficulty in the indescribable confusion that prevailed—I moved the whole two hundred to the platforms.

I had seen nothing of the Nihilists so far, and this caused me some surprise. But on the platforms the order of the ranks could not be maintained,

and when about half of my command were aboard the train, I was addressed by one of a file of five men, who reported that he and his comrades had been told off to accompany me ; and he produced written instructions to that effect.

I glanced at the order and saw that it was sufficiently in form to enable me to take the men with me ; and while pretending to study the paper I looked searchingly at each of the men. They were a daredevil set in all truth ; but they stood in their uniforms with as military an air as the average Russian rankers.

I assumed an air of great vexation, and rapping out an oath loud enough for all about me to hear, I called up the sergeant of my own regiment, and telling him the men had been sent to join me, and cursing them and everybody in general for the interruption, told him to find places in the train for them. In this way everything went smoothly, and we were gliding out of Moscow for the short run, while I sat back alone in the first class compartment which I had had reserved for myself.

I had still some slight preparations to make, and wished to be alone to think. First I examined my arms carefully. I looked to every chamber of my revolver. Each bullet might mean a life before the day was three hours older. Next, I looked to my sword. It was the same that had seen me through my trouble with Devinsky, and I knew it as a man learns to know the feel of his walking stick. Lastly, I had a long, deadly looking dagger, the sheath fastened to the right hip of my trousers where it could be drawn with the greatest ease. As a final reserve I had in a small secret pocket a couple of pills—poison enough to kill half a dozen men. I meant to make a quick end of things if they went wrong.

Satisfied that everything was in order, I lay back and mapped out again the exact disposition of the men in my charge, and the precise course I meant to take at the critical moment. I was still occupied in this when the train drew up at the little station, Vsatesk ; and less than half an hour later I had reached my section and begun to post my men. I looked about me for the four alder trees and the exact spot where I had been warned to take my post.

Knowing what I did about the Nihilist intentions, it was obviously unnecessary to pay much heed to any part of the line except that where I knew the "accident" would happen. So I sent out a couple of sergeants to dispose the men on that part of the road which lay to the north of the four trees.

These were easily found, and I carried out to the letter the Nihilist instructions to post the five men who were to kill the Czar immediately to the right, or south, of the line formed by the three trees as described to me.

I did this for the simple reason that it was my cue to deceive every one right up to the last moment. Had I altered the disposition of these men they would have known that I meant treachery to them and the cause ; and what the consequences would have been it was impossible to foresee. As it was they took their places with a grim readiness and a significant glance that spoke to me eloquently.

As soon as all the troops were placed I took my own position, and gird-

ing up my patience to wait for the coming of the imperial train and with it my opportunity, I scanned every inch of the line for some evidence of the Nihilists' preparations. I could not detect a sign of any change in the road or of any preparation of any kind. The track was not very well laid, and in several spots it bore marks of recent repairs; but beyond that there was nothing. This fact may have helped to conceal the work of the Nihilists, of course; but although I knew almost the very spot where it had been carried out, I could detect nothing.

The suspense was trying indeed; and while I was waiting it was natural enough, perhaps, that my imagination should be chiefly busy in suggesting many reasons why I was almost certain to fail in my desperate venture.

I did not know in which train the emperor would travel. I knew of course that there would be first the pilot engine; there would also be the baggage train; probably also a special train for the suite and servants; and the imperial train. But this might be first, second, or third of the three. I had not been told as to this. So far as my Nihilist work was concerned, it was not necessary that I should know it. That work began when the train had left the line; and I had been posted near where that must happen. I concluded, therefore, that I had not been trusted with a single jot more information than it was necessary for me to have.

I should have to depend upon the Nihilists who were to move the lever being accurately informed on this point. But this troubled me. If the worst happened, of course, the "accident" must take place and the train be sent off the line, and I must use my opportunity then. But what I wished to do was to stop the train in which the emperor would travel, and if I did not know which that was, I might easily make an ugly blunder, that would expose me to danger from the Nihilists and not only do me no good with the court, but mark me out as an object for ridicule and suspicion.

This uncertainty did not present itself to disturb me until I was actually on the line waiting for the coming of the trains, and face to face with the necessity for action.

The point where I stood was about a mile and a half to the north of the station, and the line was so dead straight that it could be watched for five or six miles farther north, and I should thus have ample notice of the approach of the trains. It was a very clear day, moreover; and, as my sight was exceedingly keen and good, I knew I should be able to catch the earliest glimpse of the trains whose passing meant so much to me.

I managed to get the whole of the company under my command posted more than two hours before the emperor was timed to pass; and after I had made a show of inspecting those who were in that part of the section which I knew to be outside the sphere of danger, I did the work very thoroughly with those who were in that part where the grim, hazardous drama was to be played.

I had been careful to keep the men of my own regiment close to me and on both sides of the five Nihilist spies; and I was glad to see that many of them were among my staunchest admirers. They would have followed me to death without a word; and the sergeant, whose name was Grostef, the

most athletic fellow in the ranks, was my sworn champion, on the ground that I was the only man in the regiment who could outrun and outjump him, and beat him with any weapon he liked to pick. I believe the man loved me for my strength and skill.

The time dragged a bit for the patient fellows on guard, who were not near enough to exchange a word without the sergeants being pretty sure to hear it; and the eyes of all soon began to be cast longingly northward in impatient desire to catch a glimpse of the trains. Almost the only men who showed no signs of feeling were the five to whom the coming of the train meant, as they knew and were content to know, the coming of death also. They stood like stone figures; impassive, immovable, and stern; the type of men to whom death in the cause of duty is welcome.

An hour before the time, I took up my position finally, exactly in the line of the three alder trees, and resolved not to move again nor to have my attention drawn away from the rails until the work was over, and I only lifted my eyes now and then from the track to send a sharp, quick glance along the line to see if the train was yet in sight.

The first intimation I had that the trains were approaching came from the opposite direction. Between us and the Vsatesk station, about half a mile distant, was a signal box; and the light wind which was blowing from the south carried to my ears the sharp smack of the signal arm as it fell from the danger point, and announced the line as all clear.

I knew then it was a matter of minutes. My pulse began to quicken slightly; and my scrutiny of the track and rails increased in intentness. But the minutes dragged on, and the time announced came and passed. I knew of the Czar's passion for punctuality, and after this delay had lasted some time I began to think some real accident must have caused it. In this weary suspense, a quarter of an hour, half an hour, three quarters passed, and my watch showed 3:30, and still not a sign of even the pilot engine was visible.

Then a tiny black speck in the far straight distance topped by a small white steam cloud, told me the pilot engine was coming at last; and in the swift glances I spared from my scrutiny of the rails, I saw it grow larger and blacker as it covered the intervening space, until it thundered up, and crashed and lumbered by us, and began to fade in the opposite direction until it disappeared round the slight curve which was between us and Vsatesk station.

What the interval would be between the pilot engine and the first train, and what that first train would be, I did not know. The intervals, always differed; sometimes five minutes; sometimes ten; sometimes as much as twenty minutes were allowed to elapse. But the interval was nothing compared with the question which train would follow. On that might turn the whole result of the affair.

All the men had now straightened up, and even the five on my right showed signs of being interested. I saw them looking up with stealthy, longing, deadly fixedness for the coming of their prey. But on the line itself there was no sign of change.

I had understood that at some point the rails would be shifted so as to throw the train off the line. But search as closely as I would, I could not detect the least sign of any preparation for this. The uncertainty which this circumstance caused added to my excitement and the suspense became doubly trying. It quickened up to a climax when I saw once again in the distance the growing speck that told me the second train was at hand.

I kept my eyes glued to the rails, and my ears strained for some notification either by sight or sound that the trap had been laid. Without such a sign, I dared not do anything.

Yet nothing happened: and the black speck in the distance developed into a distinct shape, and increased quickly in size, and a slight hum came vibrating along the rails. The hum grew into the sound of muffled drums; then swelled into a heavy, threatening rumble, and rapidly climaxed to a crashing, rattling, reverberating roar, as the clattering, clanging, jolting baggage train lurched heavily by, and roared away southward.

It passed safely every point on the line; and the old question which would be next recurring with greater strain than before, and drummed itself in on my brain like a sharp throbbing shoot of pain.

When for the third time the little warning speck in the distance told me that either the Czar or his suite must now be coming, my excitement waxed well nigh out of my control; my hand stole to the hilt of my sword and loosened it in the scabbard; my fingers played on the stock of my revolver; and my eyes never for an instant left the rails, but ran up and down them with swift, eager, searching glances, hungry for a sign.

As the distance between me and the on coming train lessened, the tension increased, and my sense of baffled impotence, when I detected no sign anywhere on the rails, was staggering. By a great effort only could I prevent myself from doing something to stop the approach of the train; and my eagerness was multiplied infinitely when, in a glance I could not keep from straying to the murderous gaug on my right, I saw them, one and all, making ready stealthily for their deadly work.

But no sign on the track gave me my cue for action, and I could only wait, full of my resolve to do all that had to be done should this be the train to be thrown off the line.

It came thundering up and passed me without my being able to take a step of any sort. Like the other it traversed the whole section of the line in safety, though I saw, with an astonishment that for the moment bewildered me, that the imperial saloon was the central carriage.

Obviously the Czar had passed in safety. And I jumped instantly to the conclusion that for some reason the mechanism, which was to have derailed the train, had failed to act. But an incident which occurred almost as soon as the train had passed, showed me the falseness of this conclusion.

I was staring fixedly at the track, when at a point that was exactly opposite me, and thus in a direct line with the three alder trees, I saw the two rails swing aside from the roadbed just enough to overturn a train. There was scarcely a click of sound, and, after a moment, they swung back as silently into position.

I read the whole thing in an instant.

The operator knew that the moment had come for action, and wished to make quite sure everything would work smoothly. I knew now that the Czar was in the third train, and that the imperial carriage had been sent on with the second as a ruse.

I could now relieve my eyes from the straining task of watching the track, and I looked about me. The five men to my right were also on the alert. They had not been misled by the ruse of the empty court carriage, and were waiting in deadly readiness to strike the blow which they had come out to deal.

Then I turned my eyes northward along the straight level track, and just as I did so I caught in the distance the first glimpse of the third train, in which I knew the Czar was traveling.

I braced myself for the greatest effort of my life. I was like a man whose nostrils expand as they breathe in the scent of deadly fight.

*Arthur W. Marchmont.*

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### TO LANGUOROUS MUSIC.

My friends often say I'm becoming blasé—

Girls generally bore me, 'tis true ;

But they never have guessed why I'm unlike the rest

Of the men, with a sweetheart or two.

I met her by chance at an informal dance,

And I felt, as her beauty I saw,

A wonderful thrill—I remember it still—

That I never had felt before !

I waltzed with her then—I can ne'er forget when

To languorous music we twirled ;

And I'm willing to bet that there never was yet

Another such girl in the world !

This maiden's today in a place far away—

It's a good many miles we're apart—

But I'd seek for her there if I thought she would care

To know what is in my heart !

But perhaps *she* thinks yet of the time when we met ;

It might be that her heart was touched too ;

And wonder she may the reason I stay

Far away from her side as I do.

Ah, could I but be sure that her love would endure !

To learn I would forfeit the world,

By some occult art, what she felt in her heart

When to languorous music we twirled.

*Robert T. Hardy, Jr.*

## A TRAP FOR BURGLARS.

An episode of my guardianship over the treasures in my employer's mansion—How I awaited a visit from robbers, and the plans for their reception which the sequel somewhat disarranged.

FOR twenty years I had been a law clerk in the offices of Drew & Morgan, among the ablest counselors in the city of New York. Two of my personal characteristics can be deduced from this preliminary statement: I am trustworthy, or I should not have been in their employ so long; I am not gifted with any particular ability, or I should long since have been in practice for myself, or been admitted to membership in the firm. That perhaps is all I need say concerning myself.

As to the members of the firm, both had accumulated great wealth and now handled nothing but the very cream of legal affairs. Mr. Morgan had been traveling in Europe for six months or more with his daughter, and Mr. Drew was attending to the affairs of the firm alone. This arrangement was quite a common thing with them, first one and then the other taking a prolonged holiday.

On this last journey of Mr. Morgan's, however, an event occurred which caused the senior partner and his family to join them in precipitate haste. This was nothing more or less than the marriage of Miss Morgan to an English gentleman of wealth and position. This necessitated the sudden departure of the entire Drew family, together with a number of their servants, from their Fifth Avenue mansion. The house, in fact, was left quite alone, as all the servants not in personal attendance had been sent to the Drew summer residence at Bar Harbor to prepare it for occupancy. There was no time for the storing of valuables, or the packing of plate and pictures. There was not even time enough for the selection of a trustworthy caretaker. As a consequence I was installed in that capacity myself. Although I am a bachelor, I am a home body, seldom out at night later than eight o'clock, and I accepted the trust willingly enough.

Once settled in the great lonely house on the avenue, however, I began to have reasons for regretting the acceptance of so great a responsibility. I had not realized the value of the belongings that had been left in my charge. I discovered that I was guardian over hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of personal property in one form or another, and fully ten days passed before I was able to get a full hour's sleep at night. By this time I had purchased a number of burglar alarms and fitted them to the doors and windows, to say nothing of a brace of revolvers and a dark lantern. I knew that the house was under the surveillance of some sort of special police, but as burglaries had been committed time and time again in this rich district of the city, I did not consider them much of a protection.



Three weeks and part of the fourth of my guardianship passed without a disturbance of any kind; and I was beginning to think that the law-breakers of the city had not become aware of my solitary tenancy, and that I would go through the whole term of my trusteeship without annoyance, when I received a communication from police headquarters that dispelled all my confidence in my immunity, but gave me at the same time a feeling of still greater security. For the first time in my life I had come in personal contact with the workings of that mysterious body the detective bureau. I was delighted with their intelligence and vigilance. The ordinary citizen hears only of the crimes they avenge, and is naturally ignorant of the crimes they prevent. Here was immediate proof of their acuteness.

It was an official letter from headquarters informing me that the detective bureau had learned of an attempt that was to be made that very night to burglarize the residence I was guarding, promising me full protection and begging my coöperation in a scheme they had planned for the capture of the ruffians red handed. I was to be visited by no less a criminal light than the redoubtable "Red" Sweeney, of international fame, and his pal, "Bad Eye" Dugan. The letter introduced its bearer as Sergeant Powers of the detective force, and requested me to lend him all possible assistance during the ensuing night, and to be guided, so far as compatible with my instructions from my employer, by him and such other members of the force as were assigned to duty with him. The letter was signed with the bold signature of the chief of detectives, and the ink upon it was hardly dry.

Long training in the law has had its effect in making me the least bit crafty, and I could not help slyly comparing the writing with the stereotyped signature to an editorial the chief had published that morning in one of the dailies on "The Reform of Criminals." As I anticipated they were identical, and I paid no further attention to the letter, but turned to the quiet detective and told him I was entirely at his service. He took my acquiescence as a matter of course, excused himself on the ground that he had further arrangements to make, made an appointment to be at the Drew house at early dusk, and left.

Ordinarily I am a man of timid nature, but when bolstered up by authority I can go calmly enough through a trying scene. On this occasion I was entirely at my ease. I knew there would possibly be a struggle and perhaps bloodshed, but I did not see how any harm could come to myself, and I had no doubt about the ability of the detectives to take care of themselves and any one whom they were after. Consequently I ate my supper at a down town restaurant with unusually good appetite and repaired to the mauson of my employer with feelings akin to elation. The most staid of us enjoy a little excitement once in a while.

Shortly after seven o'clock Sergeant Powers arrived.

"I'll just take a look at your defenses while it is yet light," said he in a business-like way. "We need not expect our visitors much before midnight, but I don't want to have any unusual lights seen around the house. Our object is to let our enemy commit his crime to the extent of breaking in, so

that we may send him up for a good long term of years. The fact of the matter is he and his pal have bothered the department too much of late, and we want to get rid of them. Ah, burglar alarms, I see. Just help me remove them. They will only drive our men away. I will be burglar alarm enough for tonight."

"You are not expecting to deal with them single handed, are you?" I asked uneasily.

"Well, hardly," he answered in a tone that quieted my apprehension; "I have help on the outside."

After that we went to work arranging our trap and baiting it. The burglar alarms were removed and the windows arranged so that an entry could be easily effected. After which we repaired to the room on the second floor which I habitually occupied. Here we had cigars and wine and played cribbage until midnight. I had always slept with my light burning as a matter of greater precaution, so even after my usual retiring hour we were not compelled to sit in darkness. Our visitors would no doubt bargain for a light in my room, and be put on their guard if they did not see it.

As the hour approached at which we might expect the burglars, the sergeant became particularly garrulous and entertained me with many a story of detective triumph and some of unpunished crime. I divined that he was talking to keep my courage up, and inwardly thanked him for it. It seemed a foolish thing to do nevertheless, for he made so much noise with his high pitched voice and boisterous laugh that a clever burglar could have entered the house, transacted his business, and quietly departed without being heard by either of us. Again our game might be frightened away upon discovering that there were people in the house so thoroughly awake. But I said nothing. I am somewhat diffident and too prone to take it for granted that other people know their business.

To my dismay, too, the sergeant began to lose control of his appetite and drank copiously and frequently of the wine I had so foolishly supplied him with. The more he drank, the more and the louder he talked, and the more he talked the more vulgar he became.

His language in the early part of the evening was more refined than I expected a man of the status of a detective to use. Now it had descended to the jargon of the thief and the thick boasting of the drunken man.

"Open 'nother bottle, Mr. Lawson," said he, in the middle of a drunken dissertation on his own acuteness. I was afraid to deny him, especially as there was still another bottle in plain sight on my dressing table. I went to get it, and as I did so the sergeant reached over to the table by which I had been sitting and took my revolvers from the case in which they had been lying.

"Pretty good barkers," said he, eying them fondly.

"I wish you would put them back," I said in mild remonstrance. "They are both loaded—and they are all I have to defend myself with."

"Glad to hear it," he answered with a leer. "In that case I'll keep 'em."

"But suppose the thieves come?"

"The thieves have come, you fool!" he almost shouted, with a string of curses appended to the statement. "Come an' gone—at least one of 'em's gone. 'T'other is drinkin' perlutely to your health, Mr. Lawson."

"What do you mean?" I asked, with a gasp of astonishment and fear.

"What do I mean?" he replied. "Why, you ass, I mean that if you were to look in the rogue's picter gallery you'd see my phiz—and it wouldn't be labeled 'Sergeant Powers' either. Ha, ha, ha, that was a good 'un! I wonder what Powers will say when he learns that 'Red' Sweeney has been usin' his name so promiskus."

I saw it all. I had been duped, tricked with a forged letter, as easily as if I had been a five year old child. I myself had opened the doors I was guarding to him, and helped him remove the very alarms I had arranged to keep him out. He had taken my revolvers and put them in his pocket; therefore I silently awaited his next move.

"Pretty good joke, wasn't it?" he queried. "Thought I was a chump for talkin' so loud, didn't you?" he sneered. "Well, you must know that Dugan is a bit careless-like, especially when he knows he has an easy job, an' I was afraid he'd make a noise while he was guttin' the house. I'm going to fix you up a little dose to take before I go away. Don't look so skeered, pard; it'll only put you to sleep as nice an' cunnin' as a little baby. An' when you wake up 'Bad Eye' an' me'll be far, far away, where you'll never see us no more. Don't object, but take it like a little man, because if you decline I'll have to crack you over the head, and that'll hurt."

With that he began sifting a whitish powder from a paper packet into the glass of wine I had poured a few moments before for him. In shame and impotent anger I cast my eyes on the floor like a whipped boy.

"Come, little 'un," said he, "take yer medicine like a good little boy, an' no monkeyin' or it'll be the worse for you." It was useless to resist. I raised my eyes falteringly and stretched forth my hand for the glass. As I did so I saw two powerful blue coated arms steal around Sweeney's shoulder. There was an oath, a short struggle, a shattering sound as the wine glass fell, and of scuffling feet as three other policemen bounded into the room, and in less time than I take to tell it "Red" Sweeney stood before me disarmed and handcuffed, and I was profusely thanking and complimenting a stalwart police sergeant who introduced himself as the real Powers.

"It's no wonder he fooled you," said the latter, after I had told him my story. "But remember in future that the police department doesn't expose its hand even to the people it is protecting. We have been watching this fellow for months, and watching this house ever since you have been alone in it. And we would have nabbed him sooner, sir, but his pal Dugan was late to the appointment. We got him, though, as he came out with his first load. You will find the things on the table in the library. Now I'll leave a man to keep guard till morning for I've no doubt you are a little nervous and won't sleep well unless you know you're safe, and so good night."

There is one man in New York who has unbounded confidence in its police department. That man is myself.

*Tom Hall.*

## THE RIVER OF DARKNESS.\*

A record of some marvelous experiences in the Dark Continent—Why a water journey beneath the earth's surface was undertaken at frightful risks—A voyage on a raft along an unknown course and without the possibility of retreat.

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### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

GUY CHUTNEY, an officer in the British army, on his way back to service in India, is asked to stop off at Aden and take important despatches to Sir Arthur Ashby, governor of Zaila, on the African coast. En route the steamer touches at Berbera, where Chutney meets an old friend, Melton Forbes, foreign correspondent of an English newspaper. Suspecting that there is treachery in the wind, Forbes sends his native servant Momba through the town to investigate, who soon after returns pursued by a mob of Somali warriors. It appears that Manuel Torres, a Portuguese fellow passenger of Guy on the Aden steamer, has brought rifles to Makar Makalo, who is instituting rebellion against the English on behalf of Rao Khan, Emir of Harar.

Melton, with his servant, accompanies Guy to Zaila; their report carries consternation to the breast of the governor and Colonel Carrington, who is with him. The Arabs are already swarming about the place, the Englishmen are all made prisoners, and doomed by Makar Makalo to be sent as slaves to the Somalis of the Galla country. During the journey the prisoners are separated, Guy and Melton being carried by the Arabs to Harar, where the Emir is forced to promise the people that they shall be sent to the block in four days' time. Meantime they are waited upon in their cell (Melton having been wounded) by Canaris, a Greek, who has been a captive of the Emir for two years. He shows them a document given him by an aged Englishman, who had died in the prison, and which tells of an underground river in the neighborhood which promises them all escape. On an appointed night they overpower the guards and start.

They finally reach the entrance to the underground river; but their provisions have been exhausted and they know not what to do until, in one of their night exploring trips, they capture two stray camels, which inspires Chutney with an idea. Disguised as Portuguese, he and Canaris ride in among the Gallas, declare that they have been sent from Zaila by Makar Makalo, who is hard pressed by the British, and that the latter will only withdraw on condition that the governor of the town and his friends, who have been sold into slavery, be delivered up to these messengers. The plan is successful, and with Sir Arthur and Colonel Carrington they escape to the mouth of the cavern. They find two canoes on this river of darkness, and embarking in them, follow the current. After a journey of several days, they find themselves on a great underground lake, which appears to have no outlet. They are attacked by huge serpents and their canoes are destroyed. But on an island strewn with skeletons they find a raft, and embark on this in the forlorn hope of going wherever the current will take them. They drift against the rocky side of the lake, and Chutney hears the sound of running water just beyond the rocky wall. He and Forbes scale the heights, and with the ropes and hooks which they had used in Harar, are let down on the other side by Carrington till they find the river which is to lead them to safety. But despair comes swiftly on the heels of hope when Chutney suddenly realizes that he has made a fatal blunder, and demands of Forbes how they are to get the rope up the seventy feet stretch from the ledge to the summit of the cliff.

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### CHAPTER XXXII.—GOOD BY TO THE LAKE.

MELTON dropped the rope and staggered back from the cliff, his face deadly pale.

"Yes," he said hoarsely, "you—you are right, Chutney. How could

\*This story began in the May issue of THE ARGOY. The five back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 50 cents.

we have done such a foolish thing? From that narrow width of the ledge one could not throw a rope twenty feet in air. We are hopelessly cut off from our companions."

"Hullo, down there!"

It was Carrington hailing them from the top of the cliff, and they could make out his figure dimly in the torchlight.

"What is the matter?" shouted Guy lustily, making a trumpet of his hands.

In a moment the reply came distinctly to their ears.

"Canaris hears a strange cry from the lake. You had better come up."

"We are cut off," Guy shouted back. "We cannot get the rope back to the top of the cliff. Go tell Canaris"—his voice sank to a whisper, and he dropped on the sand beside Melton.

The colonel did not answer. The torch moved off along the cliff and then stopped, no doubt, directly above the raft.

"He has gone to aid Canaris," said Guy. "I would like to know what is taking place on the lake."

"Ah!" said Forbes, "here he comes back now."

The torch moved along until it was directly over their heads, and then the colonel called down:

"Come up to the ledge. I have a way to save you."

Guy and Melton sprang to their feet in amazement. They could hardly believe they had heard aright.

"What can he mean?" cried Guy.

He seized the rope and started up hand over hand, placing his feet on the rough places in the wall.

Melton joined him on the ledge a moment later. The torch he had left there was still burning, and its light showed the colonel where they were.

"Watch sharp below there," he cried, and almost instantly Guy felt something dangling before his face. He put out his hand and clutched a thin cord.

"By Jove, Melton, it's the fishing lines!" he exclaimed. "The colonel has tied them together."

No directions were needed to tell them what to do next. Guy loosened the hook and fastened the line to it securely.

"Go ahead," he shouted to the colonel, and the rope instantly began the ascent.

In less than five minutes, though it really seemed an hour, the colonel signaled down that all was ready.

It was a perilous undertaking to go up the face of the cliff with nothing but a smooth rope to hold to, but at Guy's bidding Forbes commenced the ascent.

A great load seemed lifted from Guy's mind when he heard his friend's voice at the top, and without a moment's hesitation he started up himself.

Had the face of the rock been perfectly smooth he could never have reached the summit, and even by the aid of the rough places he found it a

terribly difficult task. Two or three times he swung helpless in mid air, and just when he felt that he could go no farther he was pulled to the top without any effort of his own, and fell over from sheer exhaustion. He was all right in a moment or two and, hauling up the rope, they hurried back to the raft.

Canaris and Sir Arthur hailed them gladly. It was the work of a moment to attach the hook to the top of the ledge, and one by one they slid down to the raft.

Here a startling surprise awaited them. Among the rugs lay a dark skinned savage, half naked and frightfully emaciated, while on the end of the raft rested a canoe much worn and battered.

"What on earth does this mean?" exclaimed Chutney. "Where did you get that fellow? Is he dead?"

"No, he lives," replied Canaris. "I heard a strange cry out on the lake. That was the time I fired my rifle. Then I saw this canoe drifting towards the raft, and when it came near enough for me to catch hold of I found this poor fellow lying in the bottom. Nothing else was in the canoe, not even a paddle. Just before you came I was talking to him. I know a little of the language, and he managed to tell me that he belongs to Oko Sam's tribe of Gallas. His name is Bildad, and he is the same native who was pursued into the cavern by the Abyssinians."

"But how did he get away from the serpent?" asked Forbes.

"I don't know," replied Canaris. "When he gets a little stronger I will find out. I gave him some food and he devoured it like a wild beast. He was terribly afraid we would kill him, and I could hardly make him believe otherwise."

"And what have *you* discovered?" exclaimed Sir Arthur, who was bursting with impatience. "Must we die in this horrible place or is there hope of escape?"

Chutney hurriedly related their adventures and the great discovery that had been made.

"Yes," he concluded fervently, "we have every reason to hope. If all goes well we shall resume our journey down the river in a few hours."

"Chutney," cried the colonel solemnly, "I fear you are deceiving us and yourself with false hopes. The outlet on the lake is found, it is true, and by means of this rope we can reach it, but how are we to travel on down the river? Can you carry this raft over the cliff yonder?"

"Yes," said Guy, with a confident smile. "I can take the raft over the rocks. It shall be taken apart, and one by one the logs shall be hauled to the top of the cliff, and let down on the other side. To put it together again will prove no difficult matter."

"A splendid plan, Chutney," cried the colonel. "I retract what I said. And how about the canoe? Can we take that along also?"

"Yes," answered Guy, "we will take it with us on the raft. It may prove of use; but the raft, I think, will be safer for us to travel on. And now let us set about the task without losing any time. The transportation of the raft will be a difficult and arduous undertaking."

"The first thing in order is to get Bildad to the top of the cliff," said Canaris.

This was not accomplished without some difficulty, for the poor fellow was in a pitiable state of weakness; but finally, by putting a noosed rope under his arms, Chutney and the colonel, who had gone up ahead, drew him in safety to the top and placed him on a couple of rugs.

Then one by one the bags of provisions, the torches, the paddles, and the arms were tied to the rope and pulled up. Sir Arthur was sent up last, and Forbes and the Greek were left alone on the empty raft.

After some consideration they decided on the following plan: Forbes and Canaris would take the raft apart and fasten the rope to the logs. Sir Arthur and the colonel would draw them up, pull them along the top of the cliff, and lower them gently to Chutney on the other side, who would receive them on the ledge, loosen the rope, and throw them down the remaining fifty feet to the ground, where the soft sand would receive them without injury.

Guy was speedily lowered to the ledge, where the torch was still burning. Three more stuck in the crevices served to illuminate the top of the cliff.

Down in the lake Melton and Canaris quickly severed the withes that bound the raft together, and in a short time the first log was swung gently down to Guy, who stood it endwise on the ledge, loosened the noose, and pushed it over the brink. It fell with a dull crash.

In half an hour the raft was lying at the bottom of the cliff, and then several alterations were made. Chutney exchanged places with Forbes, and Sir Arthur, who found himself unequal to the task of pulling the heavy logs to the top of the cliff and dragging them along the summit, took the Greek's place, and went down to assist Chutney with the raft.

Sir Arthur and Guy transferred themselves to the canoe as the raft grew smaller, and when the last log went up they noosed the rope about the center of the canoe itself and went up hand over hand and joined the others.

The canoe was pulled up with some difficulty, and lowered to Guy, who allowed it to remain on the ledge, which, though narrow, was ten or twelve yards long. The baggage was next lowered, and then, one at a time, Bildad going first, they descended to the platform where Guy was awaiting them.

Forbes was the last one down, and, with a dexterous jerk, he threw the hook loose from above, and it but narrowly missed their heads as it cleared the ledge and struck the ground. It was dragged back and hooked in place.

The final descent was not free from accident, for the canoe slipped from the noose and fell with a crash, but with no other mishap all reached the solid earth, and with the casting off of the rope from the ledge was severed the last link that connected them with the underground lake and its horrors.

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#### CHAPTER XXXIII.—A TERRIBLE RIDE.

THEIR first act showed the true character of these brave men.

"Let us thank God for our deliverance," said Guy solemnly, and kneeling on the wet sand—an example that was followed by all—he offered a simple and fervent prayer.

Renewed hope was visible on their faces when they rose to their feet in the dim light of the torch.

"We will put the raft together," said Guy, "and then have something to eat before we start."

It was but a short distance to the water's edge, and by all working industriously the logs were soon lying on the sandy beach, and Forbes was fastening them together as before.

Bildad, from the warmth of the rugs, watched these proceedings with a look of mute wonder on his dusky features.

As soon as the raft was ready the baggage was placed on it.

"Take the canoe along," said Forbes. "It is too badly shattered by the fall to use, but it will furnish us with torches and firewood."

There was room to spare, so the boat was placed on one end of the raft, and then sitting on the sand they made a hearty meal of crackers and figs.

"I don't admire the appearance of that river very much," remarked the colonel. "It comes through the cliff as though shot by a cannon. No wonder, though, when you think of the fearful pressure from above."

"We will make up for lost time by rapid traveling, then," said Forbes.

"Ah, you think so?" cried Sir Arthur. "Bless me, I hope we will. I have an engagement to dine with Lord Balsover at the Hotel Bombay at Aden on the 10th at six o'clock in the evening. He touches there on his way to India, and I can't disappoint him, you know."

"Drop him a few lines, Ashby, and postpone the engagement a couple of weeks," remarked the colonel dryly.

"Bless me! Can I do that?" ejaculated Sir Arthur.

The laugh that followed was cut short by Guy's short, decisive voice: "Get ready, it's time to start!"

The raft lay partly in the water, and with a hearty shove from all it was pushed clear of the shore. Forbes and Canaris held it while it tossed up and down in the swirling eddies.

"Get on board," directed Guy, setting the example himself, and assisting Bildad's staggering gait, for the black had recovered sufficient strength to walk a little.

Forbes remained on shore, holding the corner of the raft till all had passed on board. It trembled fiercely in his grasp, as though eager to be off on the journey.

Far overhead the abandoned torch was glowing dimly on the summit of the cliff, a patch of brightness that made the gloom round about all the blacker by contrast. For the first time a sudden realization of the unknown perils that lay before them flashed into the minds of the little party.

"Let go, Forbes," said Guy in a firm voice.

Melton sprang nimbly on board and grasped a paddle. The raft quivered a moment and then shot, swift as an arrow, toward the turbulent stretch of water beyond.

Then came a tremendous lurch, a riotous dash of spray that took away their breath, and with a dizzy speed that was simply indescribable the trembling craft was whirled down the torrent.



The first sensation was one of uncontrollable fear, and they hung with all their might to the logs, expecting every instant to be tossed into the water. Round and round spun the raft in dizzy revolutions, until their heads were dizzy and aching. Then the harsh roar subsided, and in a little, while the raft became quiet and rested on the surface of the water with hardly a quiver.

And now they ventured to sit up. They appeared to be moving with the velocity of a railroad train.

On both sides, a few yards from the raft, smooth walls of rock were visible. Overhead was empty space.

"If this could continue," said Guy, "we should reach the end of the river in a few days."

"It won't last," said Forbes gloomily. "We'll soon run across some bad water."

His fears were shared by the rest, but as time passed on and they continued to speed smoothly between the rocky walls, they began to feel less apprehensive of danger.

"Bildad seems to be feeling quite chipper," said Guy. "Suppose you ask him how he tricked that serpent, Canaris."

"Well, I'll try him," was the reply.

The conversation commenced, and the harsh jabber which they carried on was very interesting to the rest of the party.

"Bless me; you'd think the Greek was talking in his own tongue," remarked Sir Arthur. "Reminds me of our old Greek professor at Balliol College, Oxford. He loved the language of the Athenians so much that he hated to use the English tongue at all. Worst of it was he expected all of us to be as fluent as himself. Made us talk Greek in the class room. I'll never forget how we got even with him. Lord Somebody or other—I can't recall the name now, but it was some celebrated man—visited the college. I don't suppose he knew Greek from Hottentot, but we made the professor believe it was a famous Greek scholar who was coming, one who had been making excavations on the site of old Troy during the past four years, and who, strangely enough, was then in England and expected on a visit to Oxford. The professor prepared an elaborate address in pure Greek, and when the visitor entered the class room he delivered it in the most eloquent manner.

"What's that fool talking about?" asked the visitor.

"Oh," says young Ormsby, who was sitting near me, 'he's lecturing the class on "Political Economy in Ancient Athens." He'll be through in a moment and able to receive you.'

"The visitor left the room highly insulted, and the professor, when he discovered the truth a day or two later, nearly took apoplexy."

As the laughter that greeted this little reminiscence of Sir Arthur's ceased, Canaris finished his conversation with Bildad.

"It is difficult to converse with him," he reported, "but from what I can learn he dived from the very embrace of the serpent, and succeeded in swimming to the other canoe, which he had turned adrift only a moment or two before. Without paddles or food he floated behind us into the lake."

"It's a miracle that he escaped the serpents," said the colonel, "floating about on the lake all the time."

"But how did he know anything about the entrance to the river?" exclaimed Guy. "Did you ask him that, Canaris?"

"Yes," said the Greek. "He says he discovered it himself a year or two ago just as an old Englishman must have done."

"Well, it's a lucky thing for Bildad that he ran across us," was Guy's comment; and Bildad, to judge from his contented expression, seemed to appreciate this fact thoroughly.

As the river continued on swift and smooth, with no signs of danger ahead, all went asleep except Canaris and the colonel, who were interested in the care of the raft. Several hours later they were relieved by Chutney and Forbes, and thus all secured a fair night's rest.

A scanty share of food was doled out for breakfast, as the supply was getting very low. Some time afterward a faint roar was heard in the distance, and almost before they could prepare for danger a violent cross current struck the raft, tossing it about most perilously, and they caught a glimpse of a furious body of water issuing from a narrow passageway.

"That was the other channel, the one we should have taken in the first place," exclaimed Guy. "We are now on the main river again."

"They travel separately for quite a distance," remarked the colonel. "The lake must be seventy or eighty miles in our rear. We are making splendid time."

Little did they imagine at that moment how great a change was close at hand. The river glided smoothly between its massive walls with scarce a murmur.

An hour later Forbes held up a warning finger. An ominous sound was heard far below that increased in volume with every second.

"Cling to the raft for your lives," shouted Chutney.

The first words were audible; the last were drowned in the mighty roar of the water, so sudden was its approach. By the torchlight they saw for an instant the billows of tossing spray. Then the raft plunged madly like a thing of life, a great wave broke over it with stunning force, and all was darkness.

None could remember clearly what happened after that. Plunging over the crests of enormous waves, whirling round and round in dizzy revolutions, drenched by icy showers of spray, grinding and crashing on countless rocks, the raft went on its way through that awful stretch of rapids, holding together by nothing short of a miracle. A full hour it lasted, though it must have seemed like days to the wretched voyagers.

Then the wild pitching and tossing subsided, the crash of the furious water grew fainter and fainter, and all was calm and peaceful as before.

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#### CHAPTER XXXIV.—MORE MISERY.

PERCEIVING that the danger was over, Guy ventured to sit up. His clothes were dripping wet, but fortunately he kept his matches in a tin box,

and striking one cautiously, he lit a torch which had been lying partly under his body, and was not too damp to burn.

His companions were still sprawled out on the raft, holding to the logs with all their strength. When Guy assured them that all danger was past they sat up, looking very pale and dazed.

"That was awful," said the colonel. "It's a miracle the raft lived through such a ride."

"The canoe is gone," exclaimed Forbes. "Washed clear off the deck, and— Why, hello, what's the matter, Chutney?"

Guy was looking about the raft with a ghastly and fear stricken countenance, holding the torch over his head.

"A terrible calamity has happened," he cried in a voice that was strangely unnatural. "I fear we are lost men. Where are the provisions? Where are our torches?"

"By gracious, they are gone!" declared the colonel. "Clean gone!"

It was truly a terrible situation in which they now found themselves. The provisions and the torches had been washed from the raft. If they did not reach the open air in two or three days starvation was certain.

"No," cried the Greek suddenly, "all hope is not gone. Look! here is a bag that was lying partly under me. It is half full of crackers."

"And I have three torches in my pocket," added Sir Arthur. "Bless me if I know how they got there, but here they are, anyhow."

"That scant supply of food may last us to the journey's end, if used in moderation," said Guy solemnly. "God grant us a speedy passage to the mouth of the river."

In spite of Chutney's brave attempts to cheer them up, the spirits of the party sank very low.

That meager bag of crackers must feed six mouths until they reached the end of the cavern. That event might be in a week, and it might be in a month. The uncertainty and the suspense were terribly trying.

It was some consolation to discover that the river was still flowing very rapidly. The possibility of encountering more rapids they now dreaded but little, for it was very improbable that worse places could exist than that which the raft had navigated so stanchly.

"We must travel night and day," said Guy, "and in darkness. We have four torches left. Only when we hear the sound of rapids dare we light one of them."

He emphasized his words by putting out the torch that was burning, and instantly they were plunged in total darkness.

This marked the commencement of a period in which all trace of time was lost. Huddled together on the few remaining rugs, they drifted on and on with the current, alternately asleep and awake.

At certain intervals a torch was lit for a few moments while they ate the pitiful scraps of food that Guy distributed with rigorous impartiality.

The short periods of light were taken advantage of by the colonel to record in his diary the brief incidents of the journey.

A few extracts from it, made with his permission, will make sufficiently

clear to the reader in what gloomy monotony that part of their cruise was spent, which began with the departure from the lake and terminated abruptly in a misfortune remarkable for the utter despair that followed on its track :

1st Entry.—This is the second day since leaving the lake. We received three crackers apiece. Twice a torch was lit to aid us in passing rapids. They proved to be insignificant.

2nd Entry.—We slept by turns. Had three crackers apiece. All complain of hunger. Bildad clamors for food. Current still good. Plenty of small rapids.

3rd Entry.—We now sleep most of the time. Chutney has cut down the rations to two crackers apiece. Bildad is ill. Drinks water incessantly and demands food. We are compelled to hide the bag.

4th Entry.—Current not so rapid. All in low spirits. We are tortured by hunger. Sir Arthur dreams of banquets in his sleep. Harrows our feelings by his account of them. Bildad very ill. No longer wants food.

5th Entry.—Alas! worse and worse! Bildad and Sir Arthur ill. Chutney is a hero. He tries to cheer us all. Gave half his share of food to Sir Arthur. Thinks I don't know. Bildad raving. Had to tie him to the raft.

6th Entry.—Bildad and Sir Arthur very weak. Today a gleam of hope. Canaris, after many trials, caught a fish a foot long. We devoured it raw with the utmost greed. Our strength is fast leaving us.

7th Entry.—Chutney still hopeful. Bildad and Sir Arthur in a bad way. Provisions for three days still remain. We *must* reach the mouth of the river by that time. Canaris fished, but caught nothing.

8th Entry.—The outlook is dark. I fear none will ever read these pages. The river begins to run sluggishly. Bildad shrieks and raves continually. Sir Arthur is better. They are all asleep now. Forbes and I were put on guard, but Forbes has gone to sleep, and I am afraid I shall do the same without knowing it. A dizzy weakness is coming over me and—

At this point the writer appears to have dropped his book and pencil and fallen asleep.

Just what space of time was covered by the above quoted entries from the colonel's book is uncertain. A week would probably be a fair guess. The misery of these unfortunate voyagers during that period can hardly be imagined. They suffered continually from the pangs of hunger. They traveled in utter darkness, and, to add to the horror of it all, two sick men had to be ministered to. Under these circumstances we again take up the thread of the story.

It is not to be wondered at that Forbes and the colonel were so derelict as to fall asleep at their post of duty. To remain awake in their condition was simply impossible. It was terribly unfortunate that it should be so, as what follows will prove.

The raft encountered no rapids during the time that all were sleeping, and as far as personal danger was concerned it mattered not whether any one was on guard or not.

Forbes and Chutney awoke about the same time. As was Guy's usual habit after sleeping, he lit a torch to see how the current was running. The light woke Canaris and the colonel almost immediately, while Sir Arthur turned on his rug and asked feebly for something to eat.

The very mention of food brought a hungry glare to their eyes, and Guy turned round to reach the bag. It was not in its accustomed place, and he staggered to his feet in astonishment.

"It's gone," he cried savagely. "The bag is gone. Who has taken it?" They glared at each other with fierce mistrust.

"Ah, look! look!" shrieked Canaris suddenly. "The black wretch!" and springing across the raft he flung himself on Bildad and grasped him with both hands savagely by the throat.

Melton and Guy tore him away by main force, and there beside the African lay the bag—empty.

Bildad's lips were full of crumbs, and half a cracker was still clutched in one grimy hand.

"Kill him. Throw him in the river!" shrieked the Greek, who was fairly beside himself with rage and hunger.

"He is out of his mind," said Guy gravely. "He took them in his delirium. Not one is left;" as he shook the bag in the air.

Sir Arthur made another piteous appeal for food, and Guy took the half cracker from Bildad's hand and gave it to him.

"None left!" repeated the colonel blankly. "What are we going to do? We'll starve in two days. I feel now as if I was on fire inside."

"All our rifles are gone, too," said Guy suddenly. "Bildad has thrown them overboard. The crafty scoundrel feared we would shoot him for stealing the crackers, and he threw away the guns on purpose. There was method in his madness, after all."

"The fiend!" hissed Canaris between his teeth. "And it was I who saved his life for this. If I only had known! If I only had left him to perish in the lake!"

"Hark! I hear rapids or something ahead," said Guy at that instant.

For the moment this diverted their attention from poor Bildad, who lay in a half stupor unconscious of all that was taking place.

The sound that Guy had heard was close at hand, and in a moment the raft was flung heavily upon a sand bar and remained there motionless.

The channel made a sudden, sharp turn, and the current being too swift to round the sharp angle, dashed with a sullen splash against the shore.

Guy grasped the torch and staggered forward on the beach. It was the first time his feet had trod land for more than a week.

"Here is a shore and rocks beyond it," he exclaimed. "I see a cavern, too, in the face of the cliff."

He continued to move forward with uplifted torch. Suddenly he paused and uttered a loud cry. A terrible roar echoed through the cavern a second later, and then with a single bound a great tawny beast sprang out of the shadows, and striking Guy to the earth with one blow of his mighty paw, threw himself furiously on the prostrate body.

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#### CHAPTER XXXV.—BILDAD DRINKS NEW LIFE.

THE stricken man had no time to utter another cry. The lion—for such it seemed to be—paused a moment, with uplifted head, snarling angrily. The torch had been flung back a yard or more toward the water, and was spluttering on the damp sand.

Guy's companions were helpless with fear and dread. Forbes alone had self possession enough to remember that he had a revolver. It was not loaded, and he trembled so much that he could scarcely draw the shells from his pocket.

"Hurry! Hurry!" whispered the colonel. "The brute may tear him apart any moment."

Meanwhile Guy lay white and motionless in the grasp of the lion. Not a muscle quivered, and his eyes were closed.

Suddenly, as Forbes was nervously ramming the shells into the revolver, the beast turned on his prey with a vicious growl and seized Guy's arm loosely in his mighty jaws. In another instant Chutney would have been dragged off, but help was to come from an unlooked for source.

With a single bound Bildad sprang out upon the sand, brandishing a huge spear that Canaris had brought with him from the lake.

Another leap carried him within a yard or two of the lion, and the amazed spectators had a brief vision of the enraged beast quivering for a spring at the audacious African.

Then the spear flashed in the torchlight, and as Bildad sprang to one side, the lion, with a mighty roar, toppled over on the sand—dead. The spear had pierced his heart.

For an instant no one realized what had happened. The lion in his fall had cleared his victim entirely, and before any one thought of moving forward Guy pulled himself to his feet and staggered feebly toward the raft. Melton ran forward just in time to catch him in his arms.

"Thank God," he exclaimed fervently. "You are not hurt, Chutney?"

"No, I think not," was Guy's response; "only stunned and bruised a little. It was a close call."

"Close! I should say it was. It's the first time I ever saw a lion killed in that way. Bildad saved your life, for Melton could never have killed the brute with that toy he has there."

A strange sound suddenly diverted their attention to Bildad.

The savage was ripping open the dead lion's throat with a spear, and throwing himself on his knees, he lapped up greedily the red blood as it flowed from the wound.

It was a horrible and fascinating sight. He drank long and deeply, and when at length he rose from his savage feast the ferocity of the lion seemed actually to have flowed into his own veins, so horrible and demon-like was the expression on the dusky face.

Shaking the blood stained spear, he shouted two or three times in a frenzied manner, and then tottering to the raft, flung himself among the rugs.

"We are saved," cried Forbes with sudden inspiration. "There lies meat in plenty."

Melton's words caused a speedy revulsion of feeling. The colonel shouted for very joy, and Canaris sprang toward the dead lion with drawn knife.

"Cut as much of the meat off as you can," said Guy. "Here, give me my saber. Let me help."

He turned to reach it, but a sudden weakness came over him, and he was compelled to lie down on the rugs. The colonel, in deep alarm, made a hasty examination to see if he had sustained any injury, but with the exception of a severe bruising and a slight laceration of the left arm, caused by the lion's teeth, he appeared to be all right.

Melton and Canaris were just on the point of cutting into the dead lion with their sabers, the only weapons that remained to them, when a fierce roar echoed through the cavern, repeated two or three times in rapid succession, and in the gloom they could see a pair of shining eyes.

"Run for the raft," cried the Greek; and as they reached the shore and turned around, a superb lioness bounded forward and stood by the body of her mate.

"See!" cried the colonel, pointing a trembling finger. "Two more lions coming out of the cavern. Push the raft into the water at once or we shall be drowned."

The danger was indeed imminent, and yet to leave all that meat behind in their starving condition was hard. Forbes, impelled by some mad impulse, pointed his revolver at the angry lioness, but Guy grasped his arm before he could pull the trigger. Two more lions were now in plain view, stalking slowly out of the shadows.

"The pistol is useless," said Guy. "We dare not resist. We must get away as silently as possible."

The raft had been tossed but lightly upon the beach, and with but little effort it was pushed free of the shore and trembled on the water.

A loud roar close at hand caused them to fall on board in frantic haste, and as the swift current whirled them away the three lions trotted down to the water's edge and howled in concert.

"We may be thankful we got away with whole skins," said Chutney. "It was a great misfortune to have to abandon all that meat, but a delay or an attempt at resistance would have cost us our lives."

"It means starvation," said Melton bitterly. "Those lions came down from the open air to drink. That hole in the rocks led out of the cavern, I have no doubt, and we could have followed it up and perhaps found food, or we might even have abandoned the cavern entirely and finished our journey on top of ground. We must be close to the coast now."

This statement of what "might have been" sent their spirits down to the lowest ebb. They realized that Melton was undoubtedly right. Safety had actually been within their grasp, but the lions had driven them off, and now they were drifting to almost certain death by starvation. Even had they chosen to go back and risk the chances it was too late, for the current had taken them far from the spot, and the sandy shores had merged into perpendicular walls of rock.

The torch continued to burn brightly, a piece of extravagance that called forth no rebuke.

The journey continued amid unbroken silence. Sir Arthur and Bildad

were both asleep, though it was no peaceful slumber, to judge from their restless tossings.

Sir Arthur's illness had now lasted a week. It was more of a nervous attack than anything else, but without food it was hopeless to look for recovery. He was extremely weak and lay most of the time in a stupor.

The painful bruises he had sustained kept Guy awake much longer than the rest, but at last he too fell asleep.

Thus several hours passed away and they awoke in utter darkness. The torch had burnt out during the night, but Guy recklessly lit another.

The river was flowing rapidly among scattered rocks, and as the raft approached a jagged ledge that cropped up from the water, a dark object was seen clinging to it.

"Why, it is our lost canoe," said Forbes as they drew near. "Help me catch it, Chutney. We will pass close to it."

The raft struck the edge of the rocks, and as it swung round with the current they grasped the end of the canoe and pulled it on board.

"It will do for firewood," said Guy. "We won't have to travel in the dark any more."

"Yes, yes; build a fire," said Sir Arthur feebly, sitting up among the rugs. "I'm cold, Chutney; icy cold. Have we come to the end of the cavern yet?"

"He seems a little better," whispered the colonel, coming close up to Guy. "Do you know, Chutney, I've been thinking for the last hour that we must surely be near the end of the river. Since first we entered this cavern we have traveled eight hundred miles. Calculate the rate of speed at which the current flows, and you must see that I am right. Moreover, we cannot be very far beneath the surface of the earth. Those lions do not dwell in the cavern. They only came down for water."

"I believe you are right," said Guy. "Two more days will tell. If we don't reach the open air in that time—well, it won't matter after that whether we reach it or not. I can hardly stand on my feet, and as for the torments of hunger, I need not speak of that. You know them for yourself."

"Yes, I do indeed know what it is," said the colonel bitterly, "but we must endure it a while longer. For myself I do not care so much, but Sir Arthur is in a bad way, and as for Bildad, we may have to bind him hand and foot. He sleeps now, but no one can tell what he may do when he awakes."

"We will watch him closely," said Guy. "Canaris is splitting up the canoe for firewood, and it will no longer be necessary to travel in darkness."

"See!" cried the Greek, pausing with uplifted axe. "The shores have disappeared. Has the river become wide or is this another lake?"

Chutney crawled to the edge of the raft and held his hand in the water.

"There is still a strong current," he said. "The channel has suddenly become broad. That is all."

A cheerful fire was soon blazing, and the ruddy reflection stained the water far and near, as the raft drifted on with the current. Sir Arthur fell



asleep again, and Bildad lay among the rugs as one dead, glutted with his savage feast, and his lips and hands still red with clotted blood.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.—BILDAD TURNS CANNIBAL.

ALL through that day—for such we shall call it—they floated on without a single glimpse of the shores, though a good current still existed.

Their sufferings had now reached a point that was almost unendurable. The emptiness at the stomach and the pangs of hunger had given way to the fierce pains and the appalling weakness that come to those perishing of starvation.

For two days, it must be remembered, they had eaten nothing, and for a week previous three dry crackers apiece had been their daily allowance.

Chutney, with marvelous endurance, retained his strength and affected a hopefulness he was far from feeling, though if the truth were known a share of his food for a week past had been secretly given to Sir Arthur, whose illness had roused his compassion.

The colonel was almost too weak to stand—for his previous captivity had undermined his constitution, while Melton and the Greek made no efforts to conceal their sufferings.

Bildad, instead of becoming violent, woke up very weak, and lay helpless on his rug.

It was pitiful to see how they all turned their pockets inside out and drove their fingers into the crannies of the logs, hoping to discover a stray crumb. It was useless to fish, for they had nothing to put on the hook.

After nightfall, as near as Guy could guess, the river became very narrow and the current increased perceptibly in speed. The steep and rocky shores seemed scarcely ten yards apart, and overhead hung masses of stalactite almost close enough to strike with the paddle.

"We are near the end," said Guy, making an effort to speak calmly in spite of his sufferings. "Hold out a little longer. I feel sure that we shall be saved."

"Yes, we are near the end," said the colonel, "very near, Chutney. Our sufferings will soon be over. You deserve a better fate. I wish——"

"No, no, don't talk that way," cried Guy. "You will live to see the sunlight again—I am sure of it."

The colonel turned over on his side without making a reply.

"If we don't reach the mouth of the cavern in twenty four hours, I for one will never see the light of day," said Melton huskily. "I'd hate to die in this place. It wouldn't be so hard out under the open sky."

"Water! water!" moaned Sir Arthur feebly, and crawling to the edge of the raft Guy filled his helmet and put it to the sick man's lips. He drank deeply and sank back on the rugs.

Guy crept cautiously forward to the front of the raft again—for every motion was a torture—and resumed his watch ahead, straining his eyes to catch the first gleam of light that he felt sure must come before long.

Faster and faster ran the current now and the shores flitted past like dim

specters. The channel became more turbulent and rocky, and the raft tossed and trembled as it swept over brawling rapids and grated over unseen obstructions.

When Guy turned toward his companions again they seemed to be all sleeping, and he envied them their merciful oblivion.

Bildad was muttering excitedly in his own tongue, and as Guy watched him he tossed his arms and sat bolt upright. The ugly face was frightfully distorted and the fever stricken eyes shone with a baleful light. With an apprehension that he took no pains to disguise Guy watched him sharply. There was no telling what this savage might do in the delirium of illness—a delirium aggravated tenfold by the tortures of hunger.

Guy noted with secret uneasiness that no weapon was lying anywhere near. Melton alone had a revolver, and he was half inclined to waken him and ask him for it.

Bildad, however, made no attempt to leave his place on the rugs. He kept on talking to himself at intervals, his eyes staring vacantly out on the river.

A dingy leopard skin was still bound around his loins, and suddenly seizing the end of it he began to chew it greedily.

Then he noticed the blood still sticking to his fingers, and placing his hand to his mouth he sucked it with a hollow noise that made Guy sick.

Suddenly his eyes became fixed and glaring, his hands dropped to his side, trembling nervously, and his lips parted in a wolfish expression, that displayed two rows of glistening teeth.

A thrill of horror ran through Guy from head to foot as he saw what had unmistakably fascinated Bildad's gaze. Two yards distant, facing the savage, lay Sir Arthur, propped up slightly among the rugs. His head was thrown back, and in the perspiration, caused probably by his slight fever, he had torn loose the fore part of his flannel shirt, so that the throat and part of the breast were fully exposed, and shone clearly in the soft glow from the fire.

To Chutney Bildad's wolfish gaze admitted of no misconstruction. The sight of the white flesh had roused the savage's fiercest instincts. *At that moment Bildad was a cannibal at heart!*

No words can describe Guy's feelings as he realized the awful truth.

At first a deadly faintness threatened to deprive him of all consciousness. Then came a thrill of strength, and his quick mind sought some plan of action. There was no weapon within reach. He must waken the Greek.

"Canaris," he muttered in a low voice, but the word stuck in his throat and died away in a whisper.

The sound, slight as it was, drew Bildad's attention. A glance at Guy's frightened countenance told him his horrible design was discovered. His thick lips parted in a glare of ferocious hatred—the blind fury of a madman.

He thrust his hand to his side, drew out a long, gleaming knife, and with a demoniacal laugh sprang at Sir Arthur, brandishing his weapon.

At the first flash of the steel Guy uttered a shout that might have wakened the seven sleepers, and threw himself across the raft. He fell short of the African, and staggered to his knees with another wild cry.

The glittering blade wavered a second in mid air, not ten inches from Sir Arthur's heart, and then, his eyes flashing and his face distorted with passion, Bildad turned and threw himself on the man who had thwarted him.

Guy staggered to his feet in time to meet the shock, and they fell together with a crash, the madman on top. As he blindly threw out his arms in self protection he grasped Bildad's wrist, arresting the course of the descending knife. Before the fiend could snatch the knife with the other hand he twisted the brawny wrist till the bone cracked. The knife dropped from the nerveless fingers, and Bildad shrieked with rage and agony. Guy tried to shout, but the savage's uninjured arm clutched his throat, and he felt himself jerked violently along the raft. He struggled and kicked in vain. A mist swam before his eyes, and he felt the agonies of suffocation. With both hands he tore at the brawny arm, but the grip only seemed to tighten, and then he realized that he was on the verge of the raft. He was powerless. He wondered vaguely why the rest did not come to his assistance. He felt his head and shoulders slip over the edge, and then opening his eyes he saw the madman's leering face, flushed with rage and triumph, staring into his own. His eyes closed with a shudder as he seemed to feel the icy waters close over him. Then the grasp on his throat suddenly relaxed, and he knew nothing more.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Guy opened his eyes some minutes later, and saw with wonder the the familiar faces of his friends bending over him, he felt as a man might who had come back from the grave. He tried to rise, but a firm hand pushed him gently back, and the colonel's voice said softly, "No; lie down. Not a word until you are better."

Gradually memory came back as he rested, and he knew why his throat felt so queer. In the firelight he saw Bildad lying motionless across the logs. The ugly face was smeared with blood, and Forbes and Canaris were binding the brawny arms and legs.

And there lay the knife, flashing back the light from its polished steel.

"You came as near to death, Chutney, as any man can come," said the colonel a little later, when Guy was able to sit up and lean against the fragments of the canoe. "Forbes saved you on this occasion. He got awake just in time, and crawling over the logs—for he was unable to walk—he brought down the butt of the revolver on the fiend's head. He first tried to shoot, but his weapon missed fire."

"Is he dead?" asked Guy.

"No," replied the colonel; "more's the pity. He seems to be only stunned. We've tied him up securely, so he can't do any more harm. But what started him, anyhow?"

Guy, with many a shudder, related the events that led to the attack, and his audience were horror struck at the terrible tale. The strangest part of it was that Sir Arthur had slept through it all and was still sleeping.

*William Murray Graydon.*

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## THE GOLD DELUGE.\*

Astounding consequences arising from the discovery of a chemist—Terror of the governments to whom unlimited gold meant destruction—The extraordinary lengths to which Erik Poulsen was driven to maintain his independence.

### CHAPTER XIX.—THE NEW MONEY.

A SAFE and easy landing place, hitherto unseen, now suddenly fell upon the vision of the watchful fugitives. It was the little port of Sunboevur. The end of their weary journey had been reached. The place consisted of a few wooden houses with turf roofs, hardly distinguishable from the surrounding country, where herds of sheep were grazing. Several open boats lay moored in the miniature harbor, ingeniously formed with the aid of large blocks of stone.

The cutter touched shore, and all stepped out as hastily as their weak condition permitted.

An old man, attracted by their glad exclamations, slowly approached and gazed at them in wonder. He was clad in primitive sheepskin clothing.

"Water!" several gasped, and pantomimed to him that they were dying from thirst.

"Yes," he replied, in a mixture of Danish and Faroese, "certainly we have water. Come from far?"

"Shipwrecked North Pole explorers," Erik replied; "but hurry, *hurry!* Water! We have not had a drop in four days."

"North Pole explorers!" the old man repeated doubtfully. "Follow me to my house; you can have all you want." And slowly he ambled over the rough road, the crew impatiently following him.

He moved so slowly that Szmesky and Calandro raised him on their shoulders and fairly ran off with him—the others following—to the house the old Faroese pointed out.

"So, thanks," the old fellow mumbled. "You shall have water, only give me time—give me time."

They set him on his tottering feet, and after a long absence in his hut he reappeared with a dirty jug full of turbid, stale water.

"Who shall drink first?"

"The lady," all cried in unison.

"Be careful," Erik admonished his wife; "not more than a few drops at a time."

"Now the master," the crew exclaimed.

"No," Erik replied; "each of you first; you have suffered for me. The oldest takes the lead; here, Kelly."

"It's a pity to waste precious time in compliments," Kelly said, taking the jug. "Here goes."

When each had taken a draft their spirits revived somewhat, and their next thought was of the inner man, who had also been so long neglected.

"You shall have plenty of meat," the old islander told them; "smoked meat and black bread—the best I have. Only give me time."

Again he vanished and brought forth some stale meat, air dried, as was the custom on that island.

The starving fugitives fell on the half baked, black rye bread which for this once formed to them a delicious repast.

The old man then brought out some fresh meat, and soon the meal was prepared. After that, nature held its sway and all were overcome by sleep, made pleasant and refreshing in the high, soft grass surrounding the hut.

Evening had come and several groups of Faroeans stood about, their daily labor finished, curiously awaiting the awakening of the exhausted sailors.

Restored to their usual strength, and very much invigorated by their long rest, the crew awoke one after another, prepared now to stand the rattling fire of questions asked them.

Erik told a long, fictitious story of shipwreck. The cutter was one of the steamer's boats and they were wrecked by collision with an iceberg, which knocked a hole in the ship's bow, sinking it. They took to the boats when they saw the steamer was lost, and not having time to take their instruments with them, were carried by the tide to the southern instead of the northern Faroe Islands.

"Here we are," he concluded; "poor, and with everything lost, not a penny to our name, to repay you for your hospitality."

"Do not speak of that," the old man said. "Money is rare today—that is, the new money which is worth anything. We have enough of the old; we throw that in the ocean for pastime."

"*New money?*" Erik exclaimed. "We have been away from home three years, and have not seen a human being in that time. What has happened?"

"Is that true?" the old Faroean asked, half doubting. "It is so seldom any one comes here to get news. Here, Mathias, you can talk; tell the strangers all about it."

The islander addressed, also an old man, hemmed and hawed a moment and then said that they seldom heard news on that island. Several times each year a vessel came from Denmark and strange fishermen visited them in summer. The islanders lived from what the sea and their farms gave them and were better off than the rest of the world, where strange things, awful things, had happened. He said that two or three years ago there was a sudden, mysterious flood tide of money in the world—all gold—bright, shining English shillings and sovereigns; that the more gold there was, the higher the prices for necessities of life went. They received at first double, then fourfold, and finally tenfold, what they had formerly received for their

products—sheep, wool, and eider down. It lasted until they received over a thousand crowns for their sheep. The trouble was, that when they made purchases they had to pay as much as they received, and so were not benefited. Things went from bad to worse, until money could no longer be used in commercial transactions. They could just as well fill their pockets with stones when they went purchasing—it was all one.

No other recourse remained for them but to barter and exchange, and they gave sheep for working implements, eider down for needles, and so on.

Then the islanders heard from strange mariners that the most powerful governments were in a state of chaos, and that nothing could be had for money. The shoemaker had to barter with the baker to get bread; millionaires had all become paupers, unless they had had the foresight to lay in a store of things they could use in barter; and worst of all was the lot of those poor mortals who were employed on salaries: their entire year's compensation was insufficient to buy one day's food supplies, and it was said that all of them had become artisans or mechanics. The officials were living off ground given them, and the clergymen were supported by their congregations, which furnished them the necessities of life; in place of money people made written promises of property they had not, and law as well as order was a thing of the past.

England, however, which had sent out this overwhelming flood of the yellow metal, had become rich and powerful. Its fleet consisted of vessels as large as entire cities, and no other state could oppose its terrible show of strength. One country after another was captured from the other governments in the world, until they finally could bear it no longer, and all the nations formed an alliance against England. A disastrous war broke out over the entire face of the globe.

When the war was at its height, it was suddenly reported that the English government made its gold by artificial means, and immediately this metal lost its value entirely. The nations could not collect taxes except in the form of natural products, and everywhere there was a lack of officials for the government. The war came to an end of itself, and in its place followed a universal revolution. Millions of people had been killed, and finally governments were established by popular councils. Now, since the new money has been introduced, there was peace again.

"And this new money—what is it?" Erik asked eagerly.

"Oh, that is nothing but paper. We do not quite understand here, but that matters not—we have enough of our own and need none of it. A ship that stopped here six months ago brought three men who showed us the paper money and asked whether we Faoreans wished to ally ourselves with the new Scandinavian republic. We then heard that Norway, Denmark, and Sweden had been amalgamated and were governed by a citizens' council. As we belonged so long to Denmark we were willing to rejoin our old brethren, to pay taxes and send delegates to the People's Assembly. War and military duty are abolished."

Erik and his companions were surprised beyond their remotest expectations at what they heard.

"But the new money?" Erik asked again.

"Yes, I will tell you. It is now called 'square meter' and 'square centimeter,' in place of crowns and pennies. Some of it is called 'square millimeters,' which is the lowest fractional currency. I have such a note which I received as payment for ten sheep."

He drew a paper from his pocket and handed it to Erik, who examined it with much interest.

It looked like the old paper currency, but was worded as follows :

UNITED NORTHERN REAL ESTATE BANK		
Assigns to the bearer hereof		
ONE HUNDRED SQUARE MILLIMETERS OF DANISH NORMAL GROUND.		
J. HANSEN.	S. P. BERG.	Copenhagen, 1903.

*The new mode of payment consisted of land !*

"They pay out land now," Mathias continued. "A series of figures, up to twenty four, indicates the grade or value. For each certificate a small plot of good ground will be given, or a larger tract of sandy ground, and whenever land is deposited in the bank, it is first examined and its value determined by the standard on which the paper money is based. That is all we know."

All the listeners remained mute, in deep thought over what was being related to them.

"Are there no postal steamers from here to Copenhagen?" Erik finally asked.

"Oh, certainly ; the trips were resumed a few months ago."

"What is the cost of a passage?"

"About half a square meter."

"At how much would you value our cutter?"

"I cannot say now ; it is difficult to calculate with the new money. I should think, though, under existing values, that it is worth the sum I named."

"I am only a poor man," Erik resumed, "as poor as the rest of us, and we have not the means to get away from here, unless we wish to risk our lives and sail across the North Sea." Then, turning to the crew, he added, "Will you permit me to sell the boat and sail for Copenhagen with my wife? I will return as soon as I can, or send you means to follow us. I believe, from what I have already observed, if you work on the island you can live here until then."

"Yes," Mathias interjected ; "he who works can get along very well here."

Kelly stroked his beard, and as the oldest of the crew, he said :

"We would be miserable wretches if we did not say yes. Take the boat, master."

The others all agreed with him, and Erik expressed his thanks.  
"I shall never forget it. When does the next steamer leave?"  
"In about three months."

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CHAPTER XX.—THE RESULTS OF THE GOLD DELUGE.

THEY sailed down the Oere Sound.

All the old familiar places passed before their eyes. All nature showed its bright, new green dress of spring.

But neither Erik nor his wife had eyes for all this; they were only weary; they had suffered their greatest trials and lived; what had the future in store for them?

Before they had passed Skovshoved the ship turned and, running inshore, was moored to the pier, in a new and strange harbor, where many vessels lay anchored. The gangplank was thrown out, and the travelers left the ship.

There they both stood, irresolute—clad in the costumes of the Faroe Islands—strangers in their own fatherland—yes, in their own home city.

Whom should they address? *Where* should they go? They had nothing; Erik had but a few "square centimeters" of money in his pocket, which might suffice for a meal and a night's lodging.

It was their intention to apply to the government. They had discovered by inquiry on board the steamer that the citizens' council, with its president and two vice presidents, was the only government. A Swede named Velander was the president now in office. The government palaces were near the old Christianborg Palace Plaza.

With heavy sighs the weary travelers walked through the city they no longer knew.

Erik caught up with an old man walking ahead of them and began a conversation.

"Yes," he said, "that time of war was a terrible one. The millions and millions of lives that were lost! And that awful crisis when the wealthiest were the poorest! When the millionaire starved to death and the baker was all powerful! The frightful bombardment of Copenhagen and the terrible revolution all over the world! How vivid it all is in my mind! It seemed as though the day of judgment had come!"

"How is it now?"

"Thank God, all seems quiet again; it could not last long as it was then. There were no newspapers at that time; no railroads; no ships—everything was topsy turvy; ruination and confusion all over the world. There was no authority nor law, people paraded through the streets, not knowing what they wanted. Famine added its horrors.

"Finally, every one agreed that an end must be to this; one of our old members of parliament called a public meeting and a provisional government was established. The police was abolished; every man was his own policeman, as each citizen had an interest in having peace and order. There was no money, however, and barter had to be resorted to again; therefore the



officials could not be paid as heretofore, but we agreed to furnish them the means of living until order was restored.

"Most of the old parliamentary members were re-elected, and their first task was to again operate the railroads and telegraph lines. We soon heard that other countries were following our example, and thus a gradual change for the better came. Every one deplored the war that caused all the trouble; the other matter would have been solved satisfactorily in due course.

"Then the new money came. This money was invented in Germany—now called the United States of Germania—and every country in the world followed suit. All those having land joined forces and organized a bank. The assets were based on land exclusively. Gold and silver had no value. Lately the People's Council took the matter in hand and the banks are government branches.

"Now the one owning much land is wealthy, while the one having no land of his own is poor. It is sad, but true: the poor people are still here—that will never change—never; still we do not feel it so much, as nearly half the population of the earth has been killed in war and there are now fewer people seeking a living.

"I must leave you now. The People's Council? That you will find on the Christianborg Plaza, where formerly the palace was. Follow this street; you cannot miss it."

Erik and his wife went on.

All was changed. The streets were rebuilt; here and there an old time building was still to be seen. They finally reached the old Christianborg Plaza.

The president of the council received them in a spacious apartment of the old palace. He had never heard of Erik.

"I am the man who discovered the law or principle changing basic elements; in other words, how to make gold," Erik explained.

"How so?" the president replied, in astonishment. "I understood your name to be Poulsen."

It was Erik's turn to be surprised.

"As far as I know," the other continued, "it was an Englishman named Welton who made the discovery."

"What!" Erik exclaimed, turning pale. "Another man has claimed my discovery for his own?"

"So it appears," the president replied; "unless my memory deceives me. It has been a hard matter to keep our minds clear. There certainly is a report on the discovery in print. A chemist employed in the English imperial laboratory escaped and betrayed the secret. At that time gold had already lost almost its entire value, and war was imminent; therefore the publication created little surprise. I believe the Englishman in question claimed to be the inventor. Why did you not appear before this?"

"It is a long and sad story," Erik answered. "Have you time and patience to hear it?"

"Go on; I have a little time"—in a friendly tone.

Erik then told his story in as few words as possible.

"Then it was you who made the large purchases of land at that time there were so many rumors in circulation, as to wheuce your wealth came? Now I know you."

The president also remembered hearing of the Chemeia and the Verda Island. He became intensely interested, and when Erik looked at the clock he saw that he had been discoursing over an hour.

"Wonderful!" the president said, more to himself than to Erik, adding, "And now you, like most of us, are a poor man?"

"I can't tell," Erik replied. "There are the large acquisitions of real estate I made so long ago. Of course, I have no documents or titles."

"I am sorry, but had you all your titles your land would be valueless, any way."

"How?"

"Simply this: After the war, immense tracts of land were idle, the owners of which had died, disappeared, or were lost—entire families vanished. The new states, not collecting any taxes, needed much land, as that was the same as capital, and each government sought to possess as much as possible, and issue paper bills therefor. Notices were published, in all parts of the world, that those owning land must report by a certain time and prove their title. This time has elapsed long since, and I am sorry to say your land now belongs to the government."

"What matters it? I never sought riches."

"So much the better," rejoined the president. "I am ready to do all in my power for you."

"We have nothing at all," Erik's wife now interposed, "and we do not know where to go."

"Any one willing to work need not suffer," the president continued. "Chemists are particularly sought after; there are so many chemical tests of land to be made now that chemists are very scarce. We have a laboratory at Juetland, and I can offer you a position there. The salary is one thousand square meters and a free house."

Mrs. Poulsen's face brightened and Erik smiled.

"Now we are going back to where we began—analytical chemist or a glass factory—it is all the same. Well, I accept."

The president shook hands with them both.

"In an hour your appointment will be registered. You wish, of course, one month's salary in advance."

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#### CHAPTER XXI.—NEW CONDITIONS.

THE year 1923.

The world had been revolutionized and peace reigned supreme once more. Like a threatening cloud still hanging over the distant horizon, reminding one of the storm, the memory of the riotous times lived in the memory of all. But as the grass again rises after being borne to the ground by the hurricane, so the inhabitants of the world again breathed easier, and new life awoke everywhere.

The enormous taxes for the army and navy, formerly crushing the people to the ground, were no more ; the hoarding of immense capitals by the few, the paralyzing overproduction and the fatal overpopulation—all had ended, for the time being, at least.

Fresh courage and ambition took the place of fear and demoralization. The custom houses in all countries were razed to the ground, and commercial intercourse was carried on under new systems. The railroads, neglected and ruined, were rebuilt and reorganized, and the new power, photoelectricity, had become the rival of coal. The sun, giving light and heat to the entire world, also gave power to machinery by a new system of storage.

A new world had arisen from the ashes—grand and noble spirited, to begin with renewed vigor where the old ended.

On the southern edge of the Rönningen moor, where once stood the glass and porcelain factory, the government established a new chemical station. It is conducted by a chief chemist and two assistants.

The chief is an old man over fifty, and his walk is slow. He lives in a small suite of rooms in the northwest wing of the station. From the sitting room window the moor is visible for a great distance. The sun sinks behind its outer edge in summer while the sky seems aflame in deep red, gold fire. Thick woods of beech trees cover the mountains, protecting the soft, green fields, dotted in spring with millions of primroses and narcissus. Each evening in summer and winter the chief and his wife walk over the hills, through the woods to an open space on top, where they watch the sunset. They are never seen outside at other times. The chief conducts all analyses personally, and is busy all day in the laboratory.

The chief is a widely celebrated man. Many travelers wish to see him, and ladies beg him to sign his name in their albums. He usually obliges, smiling quietly, but never says very much. The story is told that the chief, by his own request, does not receive as much salary as his assistants. When the new university was opened in Copenhagen a professor's chair was offered him, but he refused it. He thanked his friends for the honor, but preferred to remain where he was.

Only one visitor ever stirred him to unusual feeling. That was when an old sea captain, named Szemsky, called on him with a boatswain called Kelly, and remained several days. Then life came into the modest little home of the chief and the rooms were brightly illuminated.

This great chemist is also a renowned traveler, who once, when fleeing from his pursuers, reached the South Pole. He published a short account of this trip, so interesting to all the world that the meteorologists investigated the report and found that in that very year the conditions governing currents, temperature, and the records of the most unusual disintegration of the limitless ice fields made such a discovery possible. A few asserted that this could recur but once in a thousand years. If no other means are discovered to cross the ice, then "Erik Poulsen's Land," as geographers call the islands, will remain inaccessible to explorers.

*Otto M. Moeller.*

## THE BLACK TRUMPETER.

A story of the northwestern border—The use that was found for a troublesome charge—  
Lieutenant Cheatwood's pickaninny and the service he rendered Troop B—The  
flaming signal on the haunted cliff.

HIS full name was Simeon Jacob Bolliver John Henry Strader, but to the men stationed at the little army post away out on our northwestern border time was precious, and they called him Sim. Save for the glint of his teeth, this Simeon was as black as the hackneyed blackness of the ace of spades. But there was no more gloom about Sim than about the big, flaming ball of the sun that poured its burning rays down upon the dusty parade ground in front of the officers' quarters.

He took life radiantly, not to say defiantly. His deficiencies were to him a matter of serene indifference, and he wore the officers' dress coats and paraded about on the best horses with irrepressible hilarity.

His spirits, indeed, were not to be quelled by any calamity short of inadequate rations. He accomplished his chief aim in life when he got himself fed; to get himself clothed was no affair of this astute individual, who had discovered that other people would attend to his wardrobe if he only neglected it long enough.

He informed the colonel, at the beginning of his military career, as he delighted to term it, that he was irresponsible, which signified that in case of any delinquency on his part matters would be smoothed out by his "daddy," by which title he designated Lieutenant Paul Cheatwood of Troop B, to whom he owed special allegiance. But the men soon discovered that the word was not inapplicable in the sense laid down in the dictionary.

His impudence was surpassed by nothing within their ken but his self conceit. He listened to their instructions with an indulgent condescension, and then followed his own way, which was usually to leave undone what he was told to do, and to do what he found most amusing.

For a very brief season the whole troop labored under the delusion that they could manage Sim. They soon perceived that it would have been less presumptuous to undertake to tickle a mule's heel with the expectation of suffering no disagreeable consequences, and they were presently fain to surrender him openly to Lieutenant Cheatwood's control. Indeed, the lieutenant had a better right to him than any of them, by virtue of reasons which will be presented as our narrative progresses.

Sim grinned a cheerful acquiescence to this arrangement.

"I'se been a-thinkin' all 'long," he said, "dat one boss is enough fer one chile ob fo'teen."

Then the "chile ob fo'teen" straightway proceeded to demonstrate the fact that he was "too much" for all of them together.

The individual at the post most antagonistic to Sim was the colonel himself. Colonel Crandall was a corpulent man of an irritable and exacting temperament, and when Sim failed to arrive at his standard of excellence, which was painfully often, he would give the pickaninny a piece of his mind couched in language more forceful than elegant, and the two would be at swords' points, so to speak, for months at a time.

The young reprobate treated the colonel's tirades with extreme indifference.

"'Deed, he doan hut my feelin's none," he would affirm. "De kunnel am a quar pusson, an' I'se too patient a inderwigual to be put out by his electricities!"—lingering on the last word as if it tasted good.

Sim had an astonishing capacity for big words, which he aired on every occasion, to the great amusement of his hearers, for he seldom, if ever, used them correctly.

Sim accepted this mirth as a tribute to his genius, and continued to amass additions to his already distended vocabulary.

In appearance Sim was not handsome. He had a homely, triangular face, whose mouth and teeth were its most noticeable features. The former extended from ear to ear, and the upper row of the latter hung over his under lip like leaning tombstones; his ears were large, and he had the peculiar and grotesque faculty of working them backward and forward like a mule. But he wore a perpetual dazzling grin which made his countenance almost pleasant, and his eyes had an alert, intelligent look that indicated extended powers of observation. He was, in addition to all this, of a painfully inquiring turn of mind.

As I have previously intimated, Sim paid little or no attention to his wardrobe. It was doubtful if he ever owned a complete outfit at one time in his whole career. In summer he usually wore cast off articles of wearing apparel donated by the men for whom he would run errands and do other odd jobs. He encumbered himself at all times with as little attire as convenient, or as was consistent with his somewhat elastic ideas of propriety; but his chief treasure, upon which he lavished the most jealous care, was a battered old army trumpet which had been his father's before him. Next to Lieutenant Cheatwood, it held first place in his affections.

When he had become quite an expert with the trumpet, one of his favorite pastimes was to sound the call "To arms!" in the dead of night, quickly following it up with "Boots and saddles!" For a considerable time he kept this up without detection. The calls would sound, the men would be mounted, and Colonel Crandall would be puffing and swearing at the perpetrator of the joke all in the space of a very few minutes, while Sim, with his precious trumpet hid from view, would be snoring peacefully when a search was instituted for the mysterious offender.

Owing to his well known mischievous propensities, he fell immediately under the ban of suspicion; but the firmness of his denial and the total lack of incriminating evidence presented an impregnable front to the corpulent colonel's shafts of anger and abuse.

However, he played his pranks once too often, and was finally caught red

handed, so to speak, by the irate colonel himself. Of course denial and bold impudence were no longer practicable, and the joker was consigned to the guard house for a period of ten days. At the expiration of his term of imprisonment he was required, as a further punishment, to black the officers' shoes for a fortnight. For a very short period after this Sim was unusually quiet, and even the colonel, prejudiced as he was, began to look with favor on his course.

Sim's early history was as brief as it was pathetic. His father had been a trumpeter in Troop B for years, and his mother had acted in the capacity of laundress since her marriage to the colored trumpeter. When Sim was five years old his paternal relative had his military career cut short in a skirmish with a band of Cheyennes. Six years later his mother renounced all earthly claims, leaving her savings, which had reached respectable proportions, to her son and heir, bequeathing the lad himself to Lieutenant Paul. And a troublesome bequest he had proven.

Yet, with all his faults, Sim had some "good pints," as he expressed it. One of these was trumpeting. At the age of sixteen he was trumpeter for Troop B, and had more than once demonstrated his ability as a soldier.

\* \* \* \* \*

A twelvemonth after Sim enlisted in Troop B an unusual activity was manifest at the little army post.

A troop was leaving the post, equipped for a long scouting expedition. The Indians had been getting restless, and it was deemed necessary to have a few soldiers kept in the field to quell any sudden uprising.

When the troop had been out four days, and had still seen nothing either of the Indians or the main body of cavalry that was to follow the trail after a lapse of thirty six hours, the soldiers were riding about sundown in column of fours, amid a cloud of dust. Tired, dirty, and perspiring, they jogged steadily along, profanely wondering when their young commander would give the signal to halt and make camp. A hundred yards ahead was the advance guard stretching out in a long, thin, fatigued skirmish line. At the head of the fours rode Lieutenant Paul Cheatwood, commanding in the absence of the captain.

Like the majority of the men, he was clad in sombrero, buckskin riding breeches, and blue flannel shirt, while on his boot heels jingled huge cavalry spurs. Being desirous of advancing as far as possible before nightfall, he kept the troop moving until it was plainly necessary to look for a camping place. In a few minutes they entered a deep canyon, surrounded on three sides by high walls of solid rock. With Sim and the first sergeant at his side, Cheatwood left the troop near the mouth of the canyon and rode off to select a suitable spot in which to pass the night.

An immense rock, which projected from the face of the right wall a hundred yards from the entrance like a massive table, attracted Sim's attention.

"See dat rock up dar?" he remarked, pointing to it with his trumpet. "Well, dat's sacred among de reds. Dey tink de debbil er sumfin' am up dar, an' yo' couldn't git dem near to hit wif a team ob steam keers. No,

sah! Git up dar onct an' yo' am safe from exterior 'sailment," he continued, with an air of one who knows whereof he speaks.

"How's that, Sim?" asked the lieutenant, laughing. "Who told you about it?"

"Oh," replied Sim, with a superior air. "I heered some Digger Injuns talkin' 'bout it at de pos! Dey t'inks dat de sun sots down an' gits up in dat ar rock. Dem Injuns am electrical pussons, sho'!"

Lieutenant Cheatwood laughed.

"Gibson, you may bring up the troop; we'll camp here by this sacred spot. You can water the horses there," he added to Sim, pointing to a near by stream that bubbled through the canyon.

The boy had just reached the stream, and was trying to induce the unaccountably restless and uneasy animals to drink, when two shots pierced the stillness, and as he turned he uttered a scream of rage and horror, for lying upon the ground not fifty yards away was the lieutenant.

Leaving the horses to their own devices, he ran toward the inert form of his guardian, heedless of the bullets that sang in dangerous proximity to his person, as if fired from the rifle of one man. Kneeling by the lieutenant he lifted his head to find him still living. Then the young trumpeter drew his revolver and opened a rapid fire into the willows whence the shots had come, and over which the cloud of betraying smoke was merging into the hazy atmosphere. He was still shooting when Sergeant Gibson, at the head of the galloping troop, arrived.

"In dar—in dar!" shouted Sim, pointing to the willows. "De debbil am in dar! Kill 'im! Oh, de po' lieutenant!"

The incensed troopers quickly penetrated the thicket, but it was a futile effort. The cowardly assassin had fled, and they returned to their commander, who had regained consciousness, and was being tenderly cared for by the trumpeter.

"Oh, de po' lieutenant!" cried Sim, with angry tears gleaming in his eyes. "If dey hab kilt him, I'll hunt de 'trocious raskils down to de las' red. Oh, what'll become o' po' Sim if yo' dies?"

The stricken officer said nothing. He raised his eyes to the cliffs above. There, high upon the topmost peak of the canyon wall, a column of white smoke was ascending lazily. Cheatwood pointed to it excitedly.

"It's an Indian signal fire," he muttered, with an effort. "We are spotted."

"The red villain that shot you was only one of the gang, then," put in the sergeant. "Boys, I fear we're in a bad hole."

Three hours later his fears were confirmed. Signal fires were burning thickly among the mountains on every side, and Indians were showing themselves recklessly in the lower end of the canyon. One of the men who had gone out on a scout came back with a serious face.

"I'm afraid there's no hope for us. They are receiving reinforcements every moment. They won't advance until morning; but then——"

The significant pause that followed the trooper's words fully completed the dread meaning his words implied.

"If we could get word to the remainder of the troops," suggested Sergeant Gibson, "but I fear we are too closely watched."

"That's true. To signal the troops would precipitate the conflict we are so desirous of avoiding," put in the second sergeant.

At this juncture Sim, who had been an interested listener to all that had passed, put in:

"Wha's de mattah wif me climbin' up to de sacred rock an' signalin' 'em? De reds won't dar ter harm me up dere. Mebbe dey tek me fer his botanic majesky. I mout descape, an' dar's nobuddy dat keers fer me 'ceptin' Lieutenant Paul, heah, an' if he dies I doan wanter lib noways. I kin 'complish hit, I kin, sho's yo' am on dis heah celeskil worl'!"

"No, no, Sim. 'Twould be throwing your life away needlessly," objected Sergeant Gibson. "You stay right here where you'll be safe, d'ye hear me? No need of your getting killed just as you're becoming useful."

So Sim remained; but he was rebellious.

Toward midnight the lieutenant displayed alarming symptoms. It was plainly evident that he was rapidly growing worse. His wound was a dangerous one, and surgery alone could save him. The surgeon was with the main troop, and Sim implored them to let him signal from the sacred rock.

"I kin do hit," he affirmed. "Ennyhow, yo' say dat we'll all be killed in de mawnin'. Lemme go, fer de lieutenant's sake."

After much discussion it was agreed to let the lad make the attempt.

Clad only in his trousers, shirt, and moccasins, with a supply of torches slung over his shoulder with his trumpet, Sim was ready to start.

Approaching the sleeping lieutenant, he kissed his hand softly. Then with a long look full of wistfulness at the officer he turned and stepped out into the darkness. For a moment his slender black figure was outlined against the background of murky gloom, then he was swallowed up among the trees. Before he had been gone five minutes the men began to reproach themselves for allowing him to depart on that journey of death alone.

Ten, twenty, thirty, forty minutes they waited. Then the rattling crash of Winchesters from down the canyon broke the stillness of the night, and once more everything relapsed into oppressive silence. The hearts of the troopers down there within the circle of death beat loyally for the little darky who had gone, perhaps to his death, that they might be saved, and their hearing was strained to catch the slightest sound that might be wafted down from above to tell them of his fate. Great drops of perspiration stood on every brow. Had he been killed, or worse yet, captured? Shuddering, they waited, fearful of hearing the death cries of their faithful trumpeter. Suddenly, when the suspense was becoming almost unbearable, a trooper exclaimed, "He is safe! Look!" High up on the mountain, at the brink of the sacred rock, shone a bright, clear light. Soon another appeared and began to dart to and fro like a will-o'-the-wisp. It was the signal light, wielded by Sim's faithful arm.

"He's there, safe and sound," exclaimed the sergeant joyously, and the men burst into a great, ringiug cheer that echoed wildly down the cayon,



drawing a scattering volley from the rifles of the Indians. The shots, for the most part, fell short, and Gibson went on, "But is it possible that they hold the rock in such awe that they will not go up and kill him? If so, we have the superstition of the savage to thank for his success and safety."

Silence, oppressive and almost unnerving, followed. Every face, white as chalk, was raised toward the glittering beacon on high. Little the beleaguered band suspected even then that Sim, desperately wounded, was swinging the torch while his life blood was gushing from an ugly wound in his side. The trees seemed to spin around and his knees were quaking from weakness. Many times he staggered and almost fell, but the torch kept up a steady swing. Rapidly it moved as into his reeling mind came thoughts of his benefactor and the little command in the canyon below, doomed to death if his mission failed and help did not come in time.

Soon the sounds of an engagement came up from below. The steady ring of Winchesters and carbines intermingled with the screams of pain and rage brought forth by the good marksmanship displayed on either side. The Indians' songs had ceased. They seemed to realize that the flitting light on their sacred rock would bring help to the crippled detachment they had begun to regard as their legitimate prey. But still they feared to close in.

Soon the watchers saw the last words of the message flashed off. Then the lights burned steadily like twin stars for a while. After a few moments the torch moved again. "O. K." it said, and they knew that Sim's duty was accomplished.

"He's coming down now, I guess."

But no! Clear and loud on the reverberating air rang, faint and weak at first, but gaining in strength, until it fairly made the air tremulous, the notes of the officers' call. Away off to the southward came a reply that grew louder and louder every moment.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" cried a trooper. "They'll be with us before dawn. Give it to 'em, boys! The firing will be heard beyond and serve to guide 'em here."

Realizing that their hated foes were slipping slowly from their grasp, as it were, the Indians darted forward with desperate vigor, making the air hideous with their cries. Their former caution gave way to insolent boldness, and once a warrior ran up to the very muzzles of their guns, and was about to fire, when a bullet from Sergeant Gibson's revolver put an end to his interest in current events.

All through the dark hours that followed the clear notes of Sim's trumpet rang out at intervals over the mountains to the plain beyond. Toward dawn there was a lull in the firing.

During the interim of silence, which was all the more oppressive for the turmoil it succeeded, the trumpet rang out again. Far up the mountainside a sharp report broke in upon the call, and then it suddenly ceased.

"Poor little coon," said a trooper; "I reckon he's done for."

To the men of Troop B, cooped up there in the mountain death trap, it seemed as though they never could banish from their minds the events of that

awful night. Presently the firing was resumed, but it lacked the spirit that had characterized the former work. Evidently some plot was afoot among their red foes. What it could be they had no idea, but not one of them felt that there was any hope for them. Despairing determination spoke mutely from every face. The Indians were gathering for a final rush which the troops felt they could never repulse. Again, weird and shuddering, the sound of the trumpet came down from the rock.

"The lad's not dead, but he's dying," cried Sergeant Gibson.

Faint and indistinct, yet blown stronger than before, came the sound of the trumpet.

"Is it Sim?" asked a trooper.

"No, it's not Sim; it's from the south."

Again rang out the trumpet, louder and quite near the mouth of the canyon. "Gallop," it signaled.

Almost before they realized it, two strong troops of cavalry dashed into the camp cheering loudly. Dawn was just lighting up the tops of the mountains to the eastward. Stopping an instant for orders, the troops advanced upon the now rapidly retreating Indians, and soon the ringing *crack, crack*, of their death dealing carbines sounded on every side. But the trumpets sounded a quick recall, and back the soldiers came, hot, tired, and dusty, but flushed with the wrath of battle.

Meanwhile a knot of anxious men had gathered round the surgeon, who was bending over the now delirious lieutenant.

"He's bleeding internally and can't live an hour," he announced.

One in the group was an old gray haired captain who had been at Chickamauga and had seen men die by the hundred, but a lump rose in his throat and his kindly eyes filled with tears that fell unheeded on his brown hands. Suddenly the sun, that had been tinting the mountainside, sent a long shaft through a cleft in the canyon, and poured a golden halo on the dying lieutenant's drawn face. At the same instant, down from the sacred rock, came, most faintly and quavering, the mournful wail of a bugle sounding taps.

At the sound Lieutenant Paul seemed to recover consciousness. Sitting up, he listened with a rapt expression on his face. When the last faint note died away he sank back on his saddle pillow. The surgeon bent forward, and reverently raising his hat, said:

"Gentlemen, Lieutenant Cheatwood and faithful Sim have been mustered out together!"

\* \* \* \* \*

High on the mountain, amid the wild, desolate scenery, lay the lifeless form of Sim, the trumpeter. They found him still warm. At his feet lay the extinguished torch, and grasped tightly in his hand was his faithful trumpet. In his breast was a deep blue spot from which the blood had trickled, forming a crimson pool on the rock. About his mouth was a satisfied smile, one even of triumph, the men thought, as they realized, in the depths of their grief and reverence, that the black trumpeter's signal duty was over forever.

Kenneth Lake.

## THE BUNKEL MYSTERY.\*

How the robbery of the rival banks became a matter of strange coincidences—Far reaching and totally unexpected results of an act of gallantry—The battles on Bunkel Island, and the frustrating of carefully laid plans.

### SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MR. SINGERLAY and Mr. Barkpool are the two wealthiest citizens of Montoban. The former is proprietor of the Montoban Mill, and president of the Montoban Bank; the latter owns the Onongo Mill, and presides over the Onongo Bank. They have long been enemies, and their quarrel is shared by their sons, Dolph Singerlay and Phin Barkpool, but both the latter are beset by the same desire: to have a steamer of their own on the lake. Andy Lamb is the son of Mr. Barkpool's engineer, and he rescues Diana Singerlay from the persecutions of Tom Sawder, a young hoodlum. Phin quarrels with him in consequence, and the father is dismissed from the Barkpool employ, only to be hired by Mr. Singerlay. Meantime Dolph and Phin, despairing of getting steamers from their fathers, take the money from the banks of which their fathers are the respective heads. They are surprised in their work by a professional burglar, called Poddy, and his assistant, Tom Sawder, who capture the two young gentlemen, together with a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and carry them off in a rowboat to Bunkel Island in Lake Montoban. Here they are kept in a grotto, effectually concealed from view, while Montoban supposes that the two banks have been robbed by the sons of their respective presidents. Andy Lamb, however, has his doubts on this point, and he tells Rynon, an officer who has been put on the case, about a strange man he has seen on Bunkel Island. Although Rynon declares that this is no trail, Mr. Singerlay insists that the island shall be visited, which is done, with no apparent result. Andy, however, remains behind to explore further, and finally falls in with Dolph and Phin, who explain to him the true state of affairs. Meantime a gale has arisen, and Andy dares not cross the lake in the small boat he has retained. Dolph and Phin return to Poddy's cave, fearful lest they be missed, while Andy runs his boat into a little water cavern, where he overhears Poddy talking to Tom Sawder, and presently is amazed to find a heavy satchel let down through an opening in the rocks over his head until it rests on a ledge by his side. Andy's heart bounds as he realizes it must contain the money of which the two banks have been rifled.

He takes possession of it and substitutes a stone which is of about equal weight. Then he has another surprise in the sight of the first steamer that has ever appeared on Lake Montoban. He hails her and is taken on board what proves to be the Lily, from Lake Modogo, whence Captain Boscook has brought her in the hope of being able to sell her at Montoban. Andy tells him that Mr. Singerlay will surely buy her if he will run up there and deliver the satchel into his hands, but the captain is afraid to proceed across the open stretch of the lake to the town while the storm rages. So they remain in a sheltered spot during the night; and next morning, Andy gets Captain Boscook to land him at Bunkel. Here he encounters Tom Sawder, with whom he has a fight, in which Andy comes off victor, after snatching from the hoodlum a revolver which he has drawn.

### CHAPTER XXXVI.—A PURCHASER FOR THE STEAMER.

"NO, my beloved boys; you must not leave the grotto at present," said Poddy, when he left his couch on the morning after the gale. "Things have changed a little on the island. That steamboat gives a different look to our affairs; and if you go out of the grotto, you may show yourself to some of the people on board of her."

*\*This story began in the April issue of THE ARGOSY. The five back numbers will be mailed to any address on receipt of 50 cents.*

"The people on board of her are not looking for you," replied Dolph. "I am sure she has not been up to Montoban yet."

"I was sure she was going there yesterday when she stopped so long off the landing rock," added Phin. "There are no officers on board of her, and you needn't worry about her."

"I don't worry about anything in this world, my dear young friend, for it is useless to do so. I should not worry if I were captured; though you can bet all you have left that the man is not yet born that will take me alive," returned Poddy.

"If that steamer goes up to Montoban, I should say that it was high time for you to be looking out for yourself," said Dolph.

"What should you say would happen if that steamer went up to Montoban?" asked Poddy, as he paused in his occupation of making a fire near the shaft to look at the young man.

"I think that is a plain question," replied Dolph. "My father would buy her."

"No, he wouldn't!" exclaimed the chief decidedly.

"I think he would; I went down to see her, and she is a handsome steamer."

"But you forget that your father must be rather short of ready money just now," added Poddy, laughing. "But suppose he should buy her; what then?"

"Half the people in Montoban would begin to make excursions in her; and there would be five hundred men, women, and children on this island before the week is out. I think that will happen whether my father buys her or not."

"I shouldn't wonder if you were right in your last statement," said the robber thoughtfully.

"Of course Captain Boscook wants to make a dollar if he can," said Phin.

"Who?"

"Captain Boscook. That is the man that owns her, and wants to sell her. She will be a new thing in Montoban, and everybody will want to make a trip in her," answered Phin.

"There is something in that," mused Poddy, as he seated himself on his bed.

"He can make fifty dollars today out of that boat just as easy as he can turn his hand," argued Dolph, and the two sons of magnates seemed to be in perfect accord. "A hundred passengers at half a dollar apiece would give it to him."

"That would compel us to stay in the cave all the time they were on the island if the captain landed them," added Poddy.

"He would land them, for not a dozen people in town ever were on the island, and they would want to see it," continued Dolph. "Some of them might discover the new grotto."

"They certainly would have a chance to find it, though I don't think they would. But I suppose there is no help for this state of things," said Poddy, as he stirred up the fire in an absent manner.

"I think there is," suggested Dolph.

"Do you, indeed? And what may it be?" asked the chief.

"If you accept the offer I made to you, and give me the money to buy the Lily, you can do what you like with her; at any rate, you can prevent her from going to Montoban," replied Dolph.

"Do you run away with the idea that I would trust you out of my sight for a single hour, my dear boy?" asked Poddy, with a sinister smile.

"I don't ask you to do it. You can go on board of the steamer yourself, and then you can keep out of the way of any one who may pursue you."

"Too thin!"

"I should say, if I were in your boots, that I should buy that steamer at all hazards, for she is certain to be used in hunting you down," said Dolph. "I should do that if I set her on fire as soon as she was bought; and then she would be out of the way."

"That's a hundred times more sensible than anything else you have said today, Mr. Singerlay," replied Poddy.

"That is what I should do; and of course you will do as you please," added Dolph.

"But, if the idea is a good one, as I think it is, I am not exactly in a position to buy a steamer."

"Why not?"

"How could I do it without showing myself to this Captain Boscook?" demanded Poddy, who had begun to talk about the matter in jest, and was ending by being in earnest.

"I will do it for you, though you can be with me, and he will not know you from Adam," said Dolph.

"It is worth thinking about, at least," added Poddy, as he put the coffee pot on the fire. "Where is this steamer now?"

"I don't know. You sent Tom out to see if she was in sight, though it is rather early in the morning for her to be out yet. She will be along some time this forenoon, and we can hail her from the shore."

Dolph said no more, but he thought that if he could get the robber out of his den, there was at least a chance for him to escape. He had relied upon Andy Lamb. After the steamer had gone down the lake and disappeared from their view, he and Phin had been allowed to leave the cave for a time.

The tempest was at its height at about this time, and the spray was dashing over all the exposed sides of the island. They went to the cave by the lake which had been occupied by Andy. The waves beat so furiously over the shelf that they could hardly reach the place where they were to meet him. Dolph had been so far that he could see into the water cave; but the tender was no longer there.

Both of the prisoners were alarmed when they made this discovery. They had no suspicion that the Lily had taken him on board, for they had not seen the steamer till she appeared off the landing rock. The water was boiling in the cave, and they concluded that he had been driven from his hiding place by the storm.

If he had come out of the cave in the little boat, she could not have stood

it a moment, for the fierce waves would have dashed her in pieces. From the water at this point it would be impossible to climb to the top of the shelf, and they were almost sure that Andy had been drowned. They discussed the subject as soon as they returned to the plain.

If Andy had ventured out upon the lake in the tender, as he must have done, since neither he nor the wreck of the boat was there, he had not one chance in a hundred of saving himself.

At any rate, he was not in the cave, and their search for him in that part of the island was fruitless. They were satisfied that he had been lost in the storm, and with him all hope was gone. This was the reason why Dolph argued in favor of the purchase of the steamer.

"How many men do you suppose there are on board of that steamer?" asked Poddy, after he had considered the step proposed by Dolph.

"Captain Boscook told me that two hands could run her, though it was better to have three," replied Dolph. "You kept watch of her all the time she was off the landing rock."

"I did not see but two men," added the chief. "I have come to the conclusion that I shall be willing to give three thousand dollars to get that steamer out of the way."

"I think you are wise to take the bull by the horns," Dolph remarked.

"But if we set her on fire here, they will see the light from Montoban, and come down to ascertain what caused it."

"You needn't burn her, then. If you tie her up on the north side of the island they can't see her."

"You may go out and take a walk now, and see where Tom is," said Poddy. "Call him to breakfast."

As soon as they were gone he went to the shaft.

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#### CHAPTER XXXVII.—THE TRANSFORMATION OF MONEY INTO A ROCK.

PODDY was evidently impressed very strongly with the fear that the presence of the steamer on the lake would upset all his plans for his future safety. When the time came for him to leave the locality, the Lily would be a power he had not taken into consideration.

A man who had made one hundred and fifty thousand dollars as easily as he had made up this sum could not hesitate a great while in sacrificing the bagatelle of three thousand to assure his safety, or even to add something to his chances.

The robber went to the shaft. It was simply a hole leading downward, which he had covered with boards from the supply furnished by Tom Sawder. He had concealed the line by which he had lowered the bag containing the treasure and tools in such a manner that his companions could not see the end of it.

He removed the boards, and then hauled on the line. He had done as much as this before to assure himself of the safety of the treasure. The weight seemed to be all right, and he had no suspicion that any change had taken place at the other end of the rope.

He had no reason to suppose that any change would take place, for he had lowered the bag into the bowels of the earth. The crooked shaft did not permit him to see the resting place of the treasure at the bottom. If he saw any gleam of light below, he supposed it was reflected from the small openings above by which the grotto was lighted.

Poddy intended to draw up the bag, and take from the mass of bills it contained the sum required to purchase the steamer. He had no more doubts in regard to the matter than one would have of finding a hod of coal in his cellar after he had put in a ton of it.

He pulled on the line in a matter of fact way; but he was obliged to humor the burden in its upward passage to accommodate the crooks and turns in the shaft. Possibly he thought the bag behaved very strangely, and it did not give him nearly as much trouble as when he lowered it, for the reason that the rock was a great deal smaller than the bag.

He pulled the weight at which he had been tugging out of the shaft, and deposited it on the boards he had just removed.

It was nothing but a rock!

Poddy stood like a man who had suddenly been turned into a marble statue, gazing at the worthless rock which had taken the place of the treasure. He was paralyzed with astonishment at first. He seemed to be incapable of believing the evidence of his senses.

He saw the rock, and he did not see the bag. This was all he could make of it. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars had been changed into a rock!

Poddy was actually faint under the shock of that most distressing discovery. He dropped heavily upon the couch near the shaft, and his strength and his will appeared to have deserted him. He covered his face with his hands, for his head was shaken by the blow.

This man had been born and brought up within a few miles of Montoban. He had been well educated, and had been a promising young man a few years before. He went to the great city to make his fortune; but he was in too great a hurry to win it, and robbed his employer.

He spent a term in prison, and when he came out humanity turned the cold shoulder to him, and his pride, quite as much as his ambition, led him to make war on society.

He had no taste for the companionship of rogues and villains, and he plied his trade alone. He made a science of it, and studied his operations very carefully.

He succeeded in a small way, but he desired to make his fortune at once, and then retire in some other part of the world from the perils of his profession. The two banks at Montoban seemed to afford him the opportunity he desired.

On the pretense of camping out, he went to Bushrod, where he obtained the boat, and all the other supplies he needed, and had spent several days on the shores of the lake. He needed assistance, and he secured Tom Sawder for the menial work.

Benjamin Podgate was his name, as Tom had mentioned it once before.

The hoodlum had made his acquaintance the year before, when the robber made a visit to his parents. Poddy was familiar with the town ; but he had been careful not to show himself there in the daytime. He had examined the localities of the banks in the night, and laid all his plans when no one saw him.

He had promised Tom a thousand dollars for his assistance if he was successful, though the vagabond had since soared to loftier ideas. Poddy had worked on the case for more than a week, and it had been a decided success. The result, counted in money, had far exceeded his most sanguine expectations.

When he pulled up that rock, instead of the treasure which would enable him to retire from his dangerous calling, he felt as though his hopes had been nothing but an evanescent dream. The structure he had built up had tumbled to the ground.

Thousands of others have had a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and seen it all vanish in the twinkling of an eye. Doubtless Benjamin Podgate felt just as the other thousand did when their riches took to themselves wings. His wealth had come on wings, and it had gone in the same way.

The fire went out in the corner of the cave, the coffee pot upset when the wood burned out under it, and still Poddy sat on his couch.

But he was a man of power and ability, and he was not supposed to submit to the trial which suddenly confronted him. He had cooled off his head, and he came back into the world of sorrow and disappointment to which he had been oblivious for a full hour.

He looked around him. He was alone in the cave, and he realized the situation in which he had been plunged by his terrible discovery.

Then he sprang to his feet as though a current of electricity had been passed through him. He went to the shaft, and looked down it. He could see nothing beyond the first crook in it ; but there was the rock on the boards to remind him of what had happened.

As he looked at it, his fists clinched convulsively, and he drew his revolver from his hip pocket. He appeared to have come to the conclusion all at once that the transformation of the treasure into a useless rock had been accomplished by human hands.

He was too well instructed to believe in ghouls, gnomes, or any other occupants of the interior of the earth ; and his first thought convinced him that the change must have been made by some dweller on the surface of the globe.

Throwing his revolver on his couch, he seized the line, and jerked the rock to the lightest place he could find in the cave.

Dropping hastily on the ground, he proceeded to examine the rope that was tied around it. He was going to work now like a detective to obtain any information within his reach that would indicate who was the author of the change of money into stone.

"Some one did it," said he out loud, for speech seemed to be a necessity to him just then, though no one was near enough to hear him.

No one had been to the island since he placed the treasure in the shaft.



The robbery of the robber must have been committed by Tom or the prisoners. To Poddy's mind it was simply impossible that any other person could have deprived him of his fortune in hand.

Then he considered when they could have done the deed. He had permitted the others to wander over parts of the island, but he had not been out of sight of the entrance of the cave himself. The treachery must have been accomplished while he was asleep; this was the only way he could account for it.

He looked at his watch; it was almost nine o'clock. Tom had been gone some hours, and it was at least one since he had sent the prisoners to look for him. Without thinking of his revolver, he rushed out of the grotto.

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#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.—TAKING THE BENEFIT OF THE VICTORY.

ANDY LAMB had fought a desperate battle, for his antagonist was a powerful fellow, and was accustomed to just this sort of pastime, while the honest boy had never been engaged in a fight till he had met Tom as a champion of Di Singerlay. He was badly battered, for Tom struck heavy blows, and his wind was all gone.

He had exerted himself at the finish to the utmost extent of his powers of endurance. He panted like a deer from a long chase, and the breathing of both of the combatants could have been heard half way across the island.

Neither of them was disposed to move for some time. In the ordinary course of bodily recuperation, they fully recovered from the terrible excitement and the breathless exhaustion in the lapse of the next twenty minutes.

Tom Sawder was the first to make a movement, doubtless because he was no longer master of the situation, as he fancied he had been in the beginning.

He attempted to get up, rubbing his closed eye as he did so. Andy was not willing to permit any change in the situation, for he had other views. He had wiped the blood from his face, and he was rather surprised to find himself feeling tolerably comfortable, in spite of his battered face and pommel-neck and shoulders.

When he had regained his breath, he even felt able to engage in another round.

"Stay where you are, Tom Sawder!" said Andy, in low, but very decided tones.

"No, I won't!" growled the defeated pugilist.

"Do you want some more of it?" demanded the victor, as he rose to his feet, wondering that he was in no worse condition.

Tom made no reply to this question. He did not want any more of it. With one eye disabled, and with his face pounded to a jelly, there was no more fight in him. He tried to spring to his feet, but he did not succeed, and dropped back on the ground.

Andy looked about him to see what he should do with his prisoner, for such he considered him. Tom's coat was lying on the ground, and from one of the side pockets a piece of the line, such as had been used at the banks,

hung out. The sight of it suggested to the victor the solution of the problem.

He took a coil of it from his pocket. It was about ten feet long, and he cut it into two pieces.

As he approached his victim, Tom seemed to divine his intention, and made another attempt to rise. He got as far as a sitting posture, when Andy seized him by the collar of his vest and threw him back.

"What are you going to do with that line, Andy Lamb?" demanded Tom.

"I am going to tie you hand and foot, and if you resist I shall knock you on the head with your own revolver," replied Andy, as he proceeded to draw the arms of the hoodlum behind him.

"That ain't fair!" exclaimed Tom, though he did not offer any physical resistance.

"I can't stop to be entirely fair with a bank robber. You and Poddy tied Dolph and Phin in the banks night before last, and you must excuse me if I serve out the same sauce to you," replied Andy, as he secured the arms of the prisoner.

"I ain't no bank robber, Andy. What put that idee into your noddle?" protested the victim.

"You can explain it all to the court when you are hanled up; I haven't time to hear it now."

"Who's been tellin' you sech stories?" asked Tom.

"No matter, now; I dreamed them. I will help you to your feet, Tom, for I want you to walk."

"I won't do it!" added the victim sullenly.

"All right; then I shall take you by the neck, and drag you on the ground. If the rocks hurt you, it will be your own fault."

Andy was beginning to be in a hurry, for Poddy might put in an appearance at any moment; and in that event there was likely to be another sharp struggle, for the plucky victor in the first battle was determined not to yield any of the ground he had conquered in the hard fight of the morning.

Seizing his victim by the arms, he dragged him towards a spot on the shore he had selected for his next operation. But Tom cried out with pain when he began to feel the sharp rocks which wounded him, and promised to walk if Andy would let him up.

Andy did let him up, and then conducted him to a tree on the shore, where he tied him so that he could not move hand or foot.

"I am going to leave you here a few minutes, Tom Sawder; but I will be back soon, and then I will try to make you more comfortable," said Andy.

"Where are you going, Andy?"

"No matter; if you keep still, I shall not harm you. But you are a bank robber, and I shall be perfectly justified in putting a bullet through your head rather than let you get away from me. I did not fight with you for nothing; I came out of it ahead, and you are my prisoner. If you try to get away, I have two revolvers in my pockets; that's all."

Tom wanted to argue the matter, and had begun to say something that sounded like a compromise; but Andy did not wait to hear it. He darted off at the quickest run his rather impaired limbs would permit. He directed his steps to the shelf of rock, and made his way into the water cave.

He drew the tender out to the shelf, and descended in the only place where it was possible to do so, and took his place at the oars. He moved very carefully, for he knew that Poddy was in the grotto, and might hear him.

As soon as he was fairly out of the cave, where the dip of his oars could not be heard, he gave way with all his might. He had hardly been gone ten minutes before the bow of the tender touched the shore a few feet from the tree to which the hoodlum had been secured.

Tom had not done the only thing Andy feared he would do during his absence, and that was to use his voice in yells that might be heard by Poddy in the cave. But even if he did this, Andy expected that he should be able to get his prisoner into the boat and away from the shore before the chief came near enough to do any harm.

"Now, Tom Sawder, I shall trouble you to get into this boat," said Andy, as he jumped ashore and ran to his prisoner.

"What be you go'n' to do with me, Andy Lamb?" asked Tom, in a whining tone which indicated to the victor that his spirit was broken by his reverses.

"I am going to take you away from the island, and away from the bad company you have been keeping since we met day before yesterday," replied Andy, as he cast off the lines that bound his prisoner to the tree. "If you will walk to the boat and get into it, all right; if you won't, I shall tumble you into it the best way I can."

"I will walk, and get into the boat myself, Andy. But if you will just hold on a minute, I'll tell you sunthin' you'd like to know," replied Tom.

"I have not an instant to spare," added the victor, as he led the other to the boat. "The other robber, Poddy, may be along at any minute, and I am not quite ready for him."

"Who told you his name was Poddy?" asked Tom, who seemed to be bewildered by the extent of Andy's information.

"Perhaps I dreamed that his name was Poddy, and perhaps the pea pods suggested it to me. I have no time to talk. Sit down in the stern. That's all right."

Andy took the oars, and by this time he began to feel as though he had really won the hard battle he had fought. He gave way heartily at first, but as soon as he was out of pistol range he took it easier.

"I can tell you sunthin' you'd like to know, Andy," Tom began again.

"I don't think you know any more about this business than I do, Tom; so it is of no use."

"Dolph Singerlay is on Bunkel Island, Andy," continued Tom, as a sample of his information.

"I know it; and so is Phin Barkpool," replied Andy.

The hoodlum looked as though he was disgusted with his failure, and said no more. Andy was a mystery to him from that moment.

The pilot of Lake Montoban pulled for the Bay of Islands, and in about half an hour he ran the tender alongside the Lily.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—AN UNDERSTANDING WITH CAPTAIN BOSCOOK.

"WHAT on earth have you got in that boat, Andy?" demanded Captain Boscook, who was waiting at the gangway to receive the pilot.

"I have brought a victim for you to take care of for a few hours," replied Andy, as he threw the painter to the captain.

"What is the matter with your face?" asked the owner of the Lily, pausing to gaze at the battered features of the pilot. "You look as though you had the smallpox. Have you been in a fight?"

"That is just what I have been in, and I will tell you all about it when I have a little more time," replied Andy, as he turned to his prisoner. "Now, Tom, I think you can be comfortable on board of this steamer for a while."

The hoodlum seemed to be past objecting to anything, and submitted without grumbling or resistance to the will of his conqueror. Andy assisted him to the deck of the Lily.

"I want you to keep this fellow securely for a while, Captain Boscook. Where can you put him?"

"I don't understand this business, Andy; and I don't know about keeping a fellow with his hands tied behind him," replied the owner, as he looked over the prisoner.

"Put him in a safe place first, and then I will tell you enough to satisfy you that it is all right," added Andy.

"I suppose you can put him in my stateroom; it is next to the pilot house, with a door opening into it," answered Captain Boscook doubtfully.

Andy thought the stateroom would do for a prison, and he conducted Tom Sawder to the saloon deck. The prisoner was entirely subdued, and he gave his keeper no trouble at all.

He complained that his eye pained him, and Andy washed it in cold water, and did it up with an application of the same kind. He was committed to the stateroom; the door opening on the deck was locked, but that leading to the pilot house was left open.

"You haven't any right to take a fellow up and make him a prisoner," said the captain, as soon as they were alone.

"Where is the bag I left with you, Captain Boscook?" asked Andy, without replying to the remark.

The owner took a key from his pocket and opened a closet in the pilot house. He took the bag from an upper shelf.

Andy had closed the door opening into the stateroom so that Tom could neither see nor hear what took place. He could only escape by coming out through the pilot house where the captain stayed all the time.

"That's all right; and you had better burn or sink the Lily in the deepest part of the lake rather than lose that bag, or allow this young fellow to escape," said Andy, as the captain locked the closet again.

"You are not a constable, and you have no right to hold that fellow as a

prisoner," said Captain Boscook, with more energy than he had yet exhibited. "You have got into a fight with this boy and whipped him, but you ought to let your squabble end there. I can't let this boat be used for any boys' play."

"There is no boys' play about it. I am afraid you have not heard the news for the last few days," replied Andy.

"What news? I haven't heard a word. Day before yesterday morning I went on board of this boat with Sparks, and I have been with her ever since, getting her ready to come through the passage down below," replied the captain, with a blank look. "What has happened?"

"I suppose you knew that there were two banks in Montoban?"

"Of course I did; I have done business with both of them. What of them? Have they both failed?"

"No; but both of them were robbed the night before last."

"Robbed! You don't say so! Did they lose much?" asked Captain Boscook, with his mouth half open.

"They lost all the money in their vaults—nearly a hundred thousand dollars in one, and over fifty in the other."

"Good gracious! You don't say so! I never heard a word of it."

Andy told the story of the robbery as it was known in Montoban, including the disappearance of Dolph and Phin. The honest farmer who had become a steamboat man indulged in a profusion of exclamations.

"Now, I suppose if you came across one of the robbers of the banks, and could arrest him just as well as not, you would not do it because you are not a constable," added Andy.

"I'll bet I would!" exclaimed Captain Boscook. "If I saw one of them, he and I would have a fight."

"That is just what I had; and the fellow in your stateroom is one of the robbers of the Montoban banks," added Andy.

"Sho! You don't say it! That measly looking whelp?"

"He had a hand in it; but the principal one is on that island. This fellow only helped him as a sort of laborer; the other is the dangerous one."

"You can bet the price of this boat that I don't let him go!" exclaimed the captain, as he opened the door of his stateroom and made sure that Tom was still there.

"That bag contains the tools of the robbers," added Andy, who did not deem it prudent to say what else it contained, though he had full confidence in the integrity of the owner of the Lily, or he would not have trusted him as he had done.

"I thought it had something heavy in it. It shall be as safe as though it was in the vault of the bank—safer, for that matter."

"Dolph Singerlay and Phin Barkpool are both on that island, and I have seen them both," continued Andy.

"What, the rich men's sons? How came they there?" demanded the captain, opening his eyes wider than ever.

"I can't stay to tell you anything more about it, for I must go back to the island," replied Andy, as he moved toward the door.

"But you will get killed if the big robber is still there. Don't you want me to go with you?"

"No; you can do more good where you are. If you will keep safely what I have got, it will be all I shall ask of you; though I may want the boat. I am going to move her out to the island which is nearest to Bunkel, and put her behind it."

Andy went to the wheel and rang the bell to go ahead. Outside of the other islands which gave the name to the bay was a small one, rising to a considerable height above the water. The pilot took the *Lily* to the north-east side of the islet, and placed her bow so that Bunkel could be seen from the pilot house.

There was no wind at all, and she was not in danger of drifting much.

"Now you can see Bunkel," said Andy, as he pointed it out to the captain. "It is a mile and a half from here; but you can see it plainly enough."

"I have got a good opera glass in the stateroom," remarked the owner, as he brought it from the apartment.

Andy brought the instrument to bear on the island, and gazed at it in every part for some time; but there was no sign of life to be seen. He was confident that the continued absence of Tom Sawder would excite the curiosity, if not the suspicion, of Poddy; and he thought it was time for the robber to be looking for his assistant.

The pilot was satisfied, from what he had seen of Tom's movements before the fight, that he was looking for the steamer, and had probably been sent out by his chief for this purpose. Over an hour had elapsed since he first met him, and it was time for Poddy to become impatient.

Andy glanced at the clock in the pilot house, and saw that it was only a quarter to eight. He did not expect to see Dolph or Phin, for Poddy would not let them expose themselves while it was possible for the steamer to come along. Tom had been looking for the *Lily*; and this assured the pilot that she had not been seen during her early visit to the east side of the island.

Everything looked favorable to Andy, and after he had once more charged Captain Boscook to keep safely the bag and the prisoner, and agreed upon a signal, he was ready to leave.

He looked in on Tom and found that he had lain down on the bed.

"You needn't be a mite concerned about that fellow or the tools in the bag," said the captain, with energy. "Now I understand this thing, I will do all any man can."

"All right; and you may consider the steamer sold."

Andy rowed to the island, put the tender in the water cave, and landed. No one was to be seen anywhere.

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#### CHAPTER XL.—THE BOLD STRIKE OF THE PRISONERS.

ANDY LAMB had occasional fits of wondering whether or not Poddy had discovered the change in the quality of the treasure he had laid up. He had visited the water cave early in the morning, and the rock remained as he had left it. It required no argument to convince the pilot that there would

be a tremendous tempest on Bunkel Island when the robber discovered his loss.

Poddy had decided to invest a very small fraction of his fortune in a steamboat ; not that he felt any pressing need for such a craft for his own use, but for reasons which have already been given. He wished to be ready to make the purchase as soon as the opportunity came, and it was necessary to have the money in his pocket, for he was not vain enough to suppose that her owner would trust him.

Then he had made the discovery of the transformation of his traveling bag into a rock. Of course he came to the conclusion very promptly that he had not chosen the right place to lay up his treasure.

He had spent two hours in considering the matter, and in groaning over it, for it brought destruction to all his hopes. It was nearly nine o'clock when he rushed out of the grotto, so completely absorbed in the desolation of his terrible loss that he even forgot to put his revolver, which he had laid on the couch, into his pocket.

By the use of his reason he had satisfied himself that he had been robbed by one of his companions, or by all of them. He had sent Tom some hours before to look for the steamer, and he had not yet returned. Then, an hour before, he had sent the prisoners to see what had become of him. None of them had returned.

Poddy walked on the island for half an hour without being able to find Tom Sawder, and he at once came to the conclusion that he had stolen the treasure and escaped to the mainland. He saw nothing of Dolph and Phin, and it looked as though they had gone with him.

But Poddy was not satisfied with the conclusion to which he had jumped. It did not seem possible to him that Tom could have left the island. The only boat on the island was still in the cave. Even if he had been able to find the lumber to build a raft, for there were no large trees on the island, and not much driftwood, he had not had time to build it and get out of sight.

The strait was half a mile wide, and it would take him an hour, if not two, to paddle across it. He could not have swum over with the bag. It was very strange, and that was all he could make of it.

He stopped for a full half hour on the shore at the strait, watching for any movement on the main shore ; but there was not a motion of anything, not even of a leaf on a tree.

He was not quite willing to believe that Tom had called upon the prisoners to help him, for it would not have been prudent to do so, and the hoodlum hated them both. Though he had not looked for them especially, he had not seen them.

Dolph and Phin left the grotto when Poddy ordered them to do so, and they had searched in every part of the island without finding Tom. They were quite as much astonished as the chief was at a later hour.

They looked out on the lake from every point of observation, and they could not comprehend what had become of him.

Of course they could not suspect that Andy Lamb had paid a visit to the

island, for they believed he had been drowned and the tender stove in pieces. As they went to the northern and eastern shore of the island, they looked for any portion of the wreck of the boat that might have come ashore. The fact that they found nothing did not convince them that the tender had not been wrecked, for it would have been driven to the southward of the island.

The prisoners walked till they were tired, and then seated themselves on the side of the hill just above the entrance to the grotto. They had been there but a few minutes when Poddy rushed out of the cave like a madman. He did not see them, for they were obscured by the bushes.

"What in the world ails him, Phin?" asked Dolph, when the robber was out of hearing.

"I'm sure I don't know; he acted as though he was excited by something," added Phin.

"Very likely he is mad because Tom Sawder has not come back."

"And mad also because you and I did not return sooner," suggested Phin.

"What do you suppose has become of Tom?" asked Dolph.

"I could not guess within a hundred miles of it."

"I cannot imagine any way that he could have left the island."

"If he has gone, we shan't mourn his absence."

"No, I think not; if he has gone, so much the better. I thought, with the help of Andy Lamb, we should get out of the scrape. Now he has gone to the bottom of the lake, poor fellow! I am sorry for his own sake, as well as for ours."

"Do you believe Poddy will buy the steamer?" asked Phin.

"I am almost sure he will, if he gets the chance. He will be a fool if he doesn't," replied Dolph.

"That won't improve our chances, so far as I can see."

"It will make a change of some sort. I am desperate over the situation, and I am bound to do something, Phin; and I hope you will stand by me."

"I will; just as long as there is anything left of me," replied Phin, with energy. "I have had all I want of this thing."

"If we get on board of the steamer, or Captain Boscook comes on shore, I am sure there will be a chance to do something; and I mean to try, if I get killed in the scrape," added Dolph.

"I think we had better not stay here any longer, Dolph. When Poddy comes, he will say we have been keeping out of his way. He is looking for Tom Sawder, and he can't find him. He will not be good natured when he comes back."

"What shall we do?" asked Dolph.

"I think we had better go into the cave and wait for him there," replied Phin, as he rose from his seat. "He will be as mad as a March hare."

Phin led the way, and they entered the grotto. The sun was shining brightly in the sky, and the grotto was tolerably well lighted through the holes at the top of the shaft. As soon as they were fairly in the cave, they discovered the change in its appearance.



There was the coffee pot overturned ; a large rock lay on the board floor, with a long line attached to it. Things generally were in a confused state.

The first thing that attracted Dolph's attention was the revolver on the couch.

"See here, Phin !" exclaimed he, as he picked up the weapon. "He must have lost his head or he would not have left his revolver here."

"Hold on to it, Dolph ! That is the only one he has now, for he gave the other to Tom," replied Phin eagerly, as he glanced at the door to see if the owner of the weapon was at hand.

"Of course I shall hold on to it !" added Dolph. "We might as well bring things to a head now as a week hence."

"I am with you, Dolph, whatever you do. I will let you go ahead, and I will do just as you say, for we can't both be captains."

"All right, Phin. That is doing the handsome thing ; but I am perfectly willing to follow your lead."

"No ; I think you will do better than I."

"I hope we shall be good friends after this, Phin," said Dolph, looking earnestly at his companion.

"With all my heart, even if our fathers keep up the old quarrel. But we will talk of this later. What is the meaning of that rock with a string tied to it?"

They examined it, but it could not speak, and it did not explain itself. It looked as though there had been some kind of a row in the cave, and they spent a long time in trying to solve the strange looks of things. At last Dolph went to the entrance, and looked in every direction for Poddy ; but he was not to be seen.

"What is to prevent us from making off in this boat at this very moment?" said Dolph in a whisper.

"Nothing ; let us do it !" responded Phin.

They put the oars into the boat, and carried it out of the grotto. But they had not moved it a rod farther before some one came rushing down upon them.

It was Poddy, and a battle ensued.

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## CHAPTER XLII.—THE EYES OF PODDY BEGIN TO SNAP.

PODDY came down from the hill above the grotto when he interrupted the movement of the prisoners in launching the boat. Doubtless he had examined every part of the island in search of Tom Sawder. He appeared not to have thought of the boys till he saw them with the boat in their hands.

The operation upon which Dolph and Phin had begun was the result of an impulse. If they had stopped to consider the step they were taking, they would probably have waited for a more favorable opportunity. But they had strained themselves up to a high state of excitement which would admit of no delay.

Poddy had had abundant time to recover his self possession, though his terrible loss had its effects upon him. He had been looking for Tom, and though the absence of the prisoners seemed strange, he gave all his thought to his associate in the crime till he saw the boys with the boat in front of the entrance of the cave.

"Ah, my lads, so you think of taking a sail?" said he, as he approached them at a moderate pace, for he had entire confidence in his ability to manage the prisoners, and to do it without the slightest difficulty.

They had been perfectly submissive since their capture, and he looked upon them with a sort of contempt. It did not occur to him that they would undertake to resist his will and pleasure.

"That is what we were thinking of," replied Dolph.

"I don't think this is a good time for a sail," continued Poddy, with a curling sneer on his face.

"I don't think we could find a better time if we looked for it," replied Dolph, bracing himself up to meet whatever might come.

"I think you had better carry the boat back to the grotto," added the robber.

"I am sorry to differ from you, but I don't think so," said the leader of the new enterprise.

"You don't think so!" exclaimed Poddy, with a sudden start, as he took a step towards the rebel speaker on the other side. "Then we shall have to argue the matter; but I shall have to give you a heavy argument in the form of a leaden pellet;" and he carried his hand to his hip pocket.

"I suppose we shall have to take the argument in any shape you choose to give it," added Dolph, whose courage increased when he found that he was not annihilated all at once, as he had half expected to be.

Poddy seemed to be rather disconcerted when he found the revolver was not in the pocket where he usually carried it. Doubtless he recalled the fact that he had taken it out in his desperation when he discovered that the treasure had been changed into a stone, and he went into the cave after it.

"He has gone for the revolver, but he won't find it," said Dolph with a smile, though it was rather a sickly one. "Now be ready for the struggle, for it is coming."

"I am all ready for it," added Phin.

In the boat there was a small boathook, four feet long, and about the size of a broom handle. Dolph picked it up, and putting one end on the rock, broke it into two pieces with his foot.

He gave one of the parts to Phin, and retained the other himself.

"Put it in the boat where you can lay your hand on it when you want it," said he, doing the same himself.

"That is a tough stick, and it would make a fellow's head ache," answered Phin, as he complied with the request.

"You mustn't be afraid to hit hard with it, Phin," added Dolph. "But don't touch it till you are ready to use it; give it to him as a surprise. As I do the talking he will come at me first, and then will be your time to use it."

"I uuderstand, and I will be on time," replied Phin resolutely.

Poddy appeared to be taking things very coolly, for he was gone half an hour, as it seemed to the prisoners, though it was not more than half that time. - It was plain enough to them that he was looking for his weapon; and they were very sure that he would not find it, though it was possible that he had another in the bag, of whose disappearance they knew nothing.

"Don't you mean to use that thing in your pocket, Dolph?" asked Phin, in a whisper.

"Only as a last resort. I am afraid I am not a good shot, for I never practised with a revolver," answered Dolph, in the same low tone, and with one eye on the entrance of the cave.

"I have used one a good deal in firing at a mark."

"Then you had better take the thing," said Dolph, as he thrust it into his companion's pocket.

Phin turned away and examined the revolver, which was loaded in all its chambers, and ready for use. Then, in a whisper, they arranged the plan of action when the attack should commence. Dolph was to "draw the fire of the enemy," so to say, and Phin was to bring up the reserves.

But Poddy did not come when they were all ready for him, and the chances were that they would waste their pluck in waiting. Dolph was the more impatient of the two, and when he realized that the delay was dangerous to them, he proposed that they should continue the movement of the boat towards the water.

If they could put the boat into the water, and get even ten feet from the shore, the battle would be avoided; they were not thirsting for a fight on its own merits.

They had nearly reached the landing rock, when Poddy came out of the cave. The prisoners suspended operations, and took their stand for the expected conflict.

Even now Poddy moved as though he was in no hurry. No doubt he was disappointed in not finding the revolver, which he believed would cause his orders to be obeyed on the instant. He was not furious, as he was expected to be, and there was no demand for the well arranged plan of the prisoners.

Poddy walked down to the landing rock as calmly as though nothing had disturbed him in the least; as though he had not lost the bag and his last weapon. He seated himself between the water and the boys, and then looked at them with a cheerful smile; but the prisoners could see that this pleasant expression cost him a tremendous effort.

"As I said before, I don't think this is a good time to take a row," said he, as he threw one leg over the other, and became the impersonation of *sang froid*.

"And as I said before, I am sorry that we can't agree with you," added Dolph.

"Besides, I want to talk with you, and ask you a few questions," continued Poddy. "Can you tell me what has become of Tom Sawder?"

"I don't know; we looked all over the island, and we could not find

him," answered Dolph, who was willing to learn what was passing in the mind of the robber.

"Have you seen anything of the bag which contains the fortune from which I am to pay for the steamer?"

"I have not; isn't it where you put it?" inquired Dolph, interested in spite of himself.

"It is not where I put it; in a word, it is gone, and Tom Sawder has run away with it," said Poddy, apparently unmoved by the terrible news he was giving his prisoners. "I have come to the conclusion that you have joined hands with him, and that you know where the money is."

"You have a perfect right to your own opinion, Mr. Poddy; but we don't know the first thing about Tom or the money," replied Dolph.

"Of course I don't believe you," added Poddy.

"All right; you can disbelieve me. Come, Phin, let us put the boat into the water, and be off."

"You don't think I'm going to allow you to leave the island, do you?" demanded the robber, leaping to his feet; and his eyes began to snap.

"I did not ask your permission to do so, and I do not intend to ask it," answered Dolph, as he made a movement to lift his end of the boat.

As quick as a flash Poddy sprang upon him, grasping him by the throat, and attempting to throw him on the ground.

The robber had had abundant time to provide himself with a club; but he seemed to think he had no need of a weapon of any kind in handling a couple of boys. But he soon discovered his mistake.

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#### CHAPTER XLII.—A BROKEN HEAD AND THINGS CHANGE.

DOLPH SINGERLAY, like Poddy himself, was roused to the highest pitch of excitement. When his assailant flew at his throat, he resented the attack in the same manner, and succeeded in getting his right hand inside the collar of the robber.

But Poddy had double the strength of the boy, and though Dolph struggled with tremendous vigor, he soon threw him on the ground, and came down on top of him.

Phin was not an instant behindhand in his work of bringing up the reserves. Seizing the end of the boat hook with the iron on it, he rushed to Dolph's assistance, and reached the spot at the instant when he and Poddy went down.

Mindful of what his companion had said to him, he leveled a blow at Poddy's head, and brought it down with all the force of his arms.

One such blow was enough, and the robber rolled over on the rock. But he was not stunned, heavy as the blow was, for it had not hit in the right place to produce this effect.

The blood spurted from the wound; but the robber made a spring in his effort to get on his feet again. Dolph dropped upon him, and the struggle was renewed with even greater vigor by both of the combatants.

Phin struck again. This time Poddy did not move after it. He was not

exactly insensible, for he began to stir in a moment. But it was evident that he was disabled for the present, though he seemed to be recovering.

"Some of that line, Phin!" called Dolph, who still held on to his victim.

The line was brought, as there was an abundant supply of it in the boat. Dolph worked as though he had been in this sort of business for years. He rolled the robber over in spite of his attempts to rise, and passed the line around his wrists.

Phin helped him, and in a few minutes they had him bound both at the hands and at the elbows.

During this operation Poddy had been gaining on his infirmity, and had struggled hard for his liberty. The two boys easily held him, and completed their work. The prisoner had his eyes open, and realized his situation.

"I think he will hold still now," said Dolph, panting after the exertion he had made, as he seated himself by the side of the victim.

"I believe we are all right at last," added Phin. "Are you hurt, Dolph? He gave you a hard tug."

"I am a good deal shaken up, but I am not hurt any to speak of," replied the leader of the enterprise.

"I should have thought that first hit of mine would have killed him," added Phin, as he looked over the head of the sufferer. "He has an awful wound."

"Does your head ache, Mr. Poddy?" asked Dolph, bending over the robber.

"Of course it does; but I don't care for that. The worst thing about it is that I have been upset by a couple of boys," replied Poddy, jerking himself up into a sitting posture.

"That is bad, I know, after your declaration that the man was not born that could arrest you," added Dolph. "I am sorry we had to hurt you, for you have been civil to us. We have no desire to make you any more uncomfortable than is necessary."

"Then untie those lines, for they hurt me," said Poddy.

"You must excuse me if I decline to do that; but I will try to fix them so that they won't hurt you," answered Dolph.

He arranged the cords so that the victim said they were easier. Then the two boys brought water from the lake, and such things as were needed from the cave, and dressed Poddy's wounds, tying them up in his handkerchiefs, of which they found three in his pockets.

"I hope you feel better now," said Dolph, when they had done all they could for the sufferer, in return for his kind treatment of them when they were the prisoners.

"I feel as well as can be expected of a man with twenty years of prison life before him," replied Poddy, with a sickly smile. "Things have changed with me, and you are now on the top of the wave. You will get a pleasant welcome back to Montoban, and no one will say anything of your attempt to clean out the two banks."

"Things have looked too uncertain up to now for us to think of that before," added Phin. "We were not sure as to how this thing was coming out."

"I wonder that Tom Sawder was not here to take a hand in the business," added Poddy. "You can hand over one of the bank robbers; the only one, for that matter, for Tom was nothing but a stick, and did me more harm than good."

"Tom doesn't amount to anything, and he never will," said Dolph.

"I am rather sorry you can't hand over to the banks the money they have lost, since it has slipped out of my hands."

"Do you really mean, Mr. Poddy, that you have not the money that was in the bag?" asked Phin.

"That is just what I mean; and you ought to know more about it than I do," replied Poddy.

"We know nothing at all about it," protested Dolph, and Phin said the same. "We have not seen Tom since he left the cave this morning."

"Then Tom is acting on his own hook. Can he swim?" asked the robber.

"He can."

"I did not think of it before; but he must have swum over that strait."

"He could not swim over and carry the bag with him," added Dolph.

"Very likely he has hidden it somewhere on the island, and will come after it when the excitement is all over," suggested the robber. "But I am faint."

The boys brought more fresh water, and washed his head and rubbed his temples. He thought some food would benefit him, and it was brought. Phin fed him, for they would not free his hands, while Dolph made a visit to the cave to see if there was anything there to be taken into the boat.

On his return he asked the meaning of the rock with the cord attached to it.

Poddy told what he had done with the bag, and in what manner he had discovered his loss. He was confident that Tom Sawder had made the substitution.

The battle had been fought and won, and both of the heroes of the conflict were anxious to return to Montoban; and they were inclined to glow over the reception which would be extended to them when they handed over the chief robber.

They talked over the disappearance of the treasure, and they were willing to believe that Tom had swum across the strait, because they could not account for his absence in any other way. As he could not have carried the bag with him he must have concealed it on the island, though he had probably taken a share of the plunder for his immediate wants.

Dolph said they must search for the bag, and volunteered to take charge of the prisoner while his companion made the round of the island for this purpose. Phin departed on his mission, and it was agreed that he should examine the hill by the cave first.

He looked into all the openings near the top of it, and then descended to

the plain. He had hardly put his foot on the level ground before he saw Andy Lamb step out from behind a clump of savins.

The sight of him startled the searcher, for he was confident that Andy had been drowned, and thought that possibly Tom Sawder had met with the same fate.

"I am glad to see you, Phin," said Andy, in the most cheerful tones, for he was quite satisfied with his morning's work.

"Dolph and I were as sure as we could be that you were drowned in the storm yesterday," replied Phin; and even now he could not see how it had been otherwise.

"Do I look as though I had been drowned?" asked Andy.

"But the waves must have smashed your boat."

"Not a bit of it; and if you don't believe me, the boat is in the cave now."

"We came over here in the storm to look for you. There was no boat in the cave, and the waves were beating over the top of the hill."

"But you must have seen the steamer. I went on board of her," replied Andy. "Where is Dolph?"

It was Andy's turn to be amazed when Phin told him that Dolph was guarding the prisoner.

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#### CHAPTER XLIII.—WITH FLYING COLORS.

"WHAT do you mean by guarding the prisoner, Phin?" asked Andy, who had been not a little concerned about the safety of the two prisoners he had left on the island when he removed Tom Sawder.

"I mean that we had a fight with Poddy; and after we had broken his head, we tied him with cords, as he did us at the banks," replied Phin, who could not be blamed for a little exultation in his tones and manner.

"You broke his head!" exclaimed Andy, who had not expected any such decided action on the part of the sons of the magnates.

Phin gave the details of the battle at the landing rock, and did full justice to the exciting scene in which he had been an actor.

Andy was glad that the last of the enemies had been overcome, for he had expected to take part in a grand conflict.

"We are all ready to go back to Montoban," continued Phin; "but Tom Sawder has got off, and must have escaped by swimming across the strait. We are satisfied that he hid the bag containing the money, and I am going to see if I can find it."

"You won't find it," added Andy, laughing.

"What is the reason I won't?" inquired Phin, who believed that he and Dolph had done the whole business of capturing the robbers.

"Because the bag is not hidden on the island, and Tom did not swim over the strait," replied Andy.

"How do you know?" Phin insisted, for he did not like to have his statement doubted.

"Because I have both Tom and the bag," answered the pilot quietly.

"You have them!" exclaimed Phin, starting back, and looking Andy in the face.

"That is so; but as I don't care about telling the story over any more than is necessary, I will see you and Dolph together as soon as I have made a signal for the steamer to come over to the island," said Andy, as he started for the other end of the plain.

He had agreed upon this signal with Captain Boscook. It was a red cloth he had obtained on board of the boat, and he displayed it on the top of a savin. It was seen at once.

Phin remained with the pilot, for he could hardly believe that Andy had taken a hand in the work of capturing the robbers.

The signal was seen at once, for Captain Boscook remained in the pilot house, and was on the lookout for it.

In a few minutes more the Lily was seen coming out from the island which had partly concealed her, and Phin was compelled to admit that Andy was the master of the situation, and that he and Dolph had only put on the "finishing touches."

"Now, I should like to get the tender, which I left in the water cave, Phin; and, if you like, we will go out and meet the steamer as she comes this way," said the pilot, when he had satisfied himself that everything was moving as agreed upon.

"Where will she land?" asked Phin.

"I told the captain to take her to the north side of the island; but as things are now she may just as well go to the landing rock, where we can take Poddy on board," replied Andy, as he led the way to the shelf of rock near the cave.

Andy intercepted the Lily before she reached the island, and he and Phin went on board.

The pilot went to the saloon deck, and then to the pilot house, followed by his companion.

"I didn't expect you quite so soon," said Captain Boscook. "I thought it would take some time to do the business you had in hand."

"So it would have done," replied Andy, as he took the wheel and rang the bell to go ahead; "but Dolph and Phin had fought the battle and broken the robber's head. They behaved like heroes, and made a prisoner of the villain. All we have to do now is to take him on board and go to Montoban; and they will be glad to see us."

"Plucky boys, if they did that," added the captain.

"Look into that stateroom, Phin, and tell me if you think Tom Sawder swam across the strait," added Andy, as he pointed to the door of the room.

"Of course he didn't, for there he is on the bed," replied Phin. "But what is the matter with his face? And I have been on the point of asking you what ailed your face, Andy."

"I will tell you all about it as soon as we get to the island," answered the pilot. "Now, Captain Boscook, will you unlock that closet again?"

"To be sure I will; but it is all right," replied he, as he complied with the request.



"I have no doubt of that. There is the bag, Phin ; and though it has not been opened, I have no doubt the money is all in it," continued Andy, as the captain produced the bag. "You see that Tom did not hide it on the island."

"I see that he didn't ; and we shall return to Montoban with flying colors," replied Phin, delighted to find that the money was to be returned to the banks.

"You came within an ace of selling your steamer this morning, captain," said Phin, after the treasure had been locked up again.

"Is that so?"

"Poddy, the robber we caught, was going to buy her, and then set her on fire."

"Set her on fire !" exclaimed the owner, who regarded such an act as no better than sacrilege.

"He wanted to burn her to keep her from being used in capturing him ;" and Phin explained Dolph's argument relating to the Lily.

Andy ran the steamer up to the landing rock where there was plenty of water for her bow, though not for the stern. Phin was the first to land, and he rushed to Dolph and the victim, closely followed by Andy.

"Tom and the bag are on board of the steamer !" almost shouted Phin, as soon as he had his foot on the rock.

"You don't mean it, Phin !" exclaimed Dolph.

"Quite impossible, I should say," added Poddy, who was as much interested as his captors to have the mystery of Tom and the bag solved.

"I have seen them both ; and here is Andy, who has had a big finger in this pie, though we did not know anything about it," said Phin, almost breathless with excitement.

"I was sure he was drowned. I never expected to see you again in this world," continued Dolph.

"A fellow has to get into the water in order to be drowned, and I have not even been overboard," replied Andy.

"Then you are the fellow that has brought Tom and me to grief," added Poddy, as he raised himself from the rock and looked Andy over rather curiously. "I saw you in the boat, day before yesterday, when you thrashed Tom Sawder ; and I heard your voice yesterday when you were here with the officer."

"And I have not been back to Montoban since. I knew you must be somewhere on the island, though I could not find you ; and I could not make Rynon take any stock in my belief that you were here. But it has all come out right in the end ; and I am glad that Dolph and Phin had a hand in capturing you," said Andy.

"Phin says you have the bag ; is that so?" asked Poddy.

"That is so."

"How did you get hold of it?"

"You were kind enough to pass it to me, Mr. Poddy," answered Andy, laughing.

"I passed it to you?"

"It amounted to that. While I was in the boat in the water cave, you lowered it down to me with a line. I took the bag; and thinking you might miss it, I tied a stone to the cord."

"That's a good one!" shouted Phin, dancing about on the rock with delight.

"How did you get hold of Tom?" asked Dolph.

"I came over to the island early this morning to see you and Phin. Tom visited the place where I was, and stumbled over me while he was looking for the steamer. When he saw me, he insisted upon paying off the old score, and I had to let him do so. But I was fighting in a good cause, and he in a bad one; and for that reason he got the worst of it after a terribly hard fight, as his face and mine will convince any one."

"Then all the mysteries are explained," added Poddy. "What made you so sure that I was on the island, Andy?"

"You took pains enough to let me know you were there," replied Andy. "I saw you while I was with Miss Singerlay in the sail boat, and I heard you call out to Tom."

"That's enough; Tom Sawder's folly has given me away. I was a fool to take him in with me," added Poddy.

"Now we are ready to go to Montoban," said Andy, with energy.

Poddy was assisted to the captain's stateroom, and everything of value was removed from the cave to the lower deck.

Phin's remark about flying colors had suggested an idea to the captain, and he displayed all his flags, so that the Lily presented a gala appearance when she left the island.

When she was within half a mile of the town, Andy pulled the whistle cord, and kept it up till she reached the shore.

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#### CHAPTER XLIV.—THE LILY'S ARRIVAL.

THE desperate whistling in which Andy had indulged as the Lily approached Montoban created a great sensation among the inhabitants, for such sounds had never before been heard from the lake. Half the people in the place appeared to have gathered on the beach in front of the town.

Bunkel Island was three miles off, and on the day before the atmosphere had been too thick to permit the steamer to be seen. On the present day it was clear, but against the background of the island no one was likely to notice the steamer, unless looking for something in particular in that direction.

As a matter of fact, no one had seen the Lily till she was within a mile of the town; and it was not till she whistled that attention was called to her. People were attending to their usual occupations, except those connected with the Onongo Mill, which was not in operation, because Mr. Barkpool had been called home by the bank robbery before he had obtained an engineer.

Both of the magnates had done all they could to discover any clue to the robbers. They had telegraphed in every direction, and descriptions of both

boys had been sent to all the principal cities within a thousand miles of Montoban.

That morning two skilled detectives had arrived from New York, and had begun upon their work at once. All the conductors on the trains had been interviewed, and they were sure they should have noticed two such boys as were described if they had gone off on their cars.

At both of the great mansions there were grief and sorrow. The two sons had run away with a crime clinging to them which could never be washed away. But on the second day people generally were more impressed by the mystery of the robbery than by the loss of the banks. No one could imagine how two boys had been able to get away from the town in the night without been seen or heard from.

The two magnates, though suffering from a common grief, kept away from each other, and did nothing to recover the runaways.

Mr. Lamb and his wife had become very anxious about Andy. Rynon had reported that he left him on the island, "running a wild goose chase." As he did not come home the next morning, they were very uneasy about him.

When the whistle of the Lily startled the inhabitants, and they saw the steamer, dressed with gay colors, approaching the town, they did not suspect that she could be in any way connected with the robbery or the robbers. But a steamer on the lake was a novel sight, and most people wanted to see her.

The front of the town was a beach on the lake, and the pilot had decided to make his landing at the boat house of the magnate, as there was plenty of water there. But he could not forget that he had one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash and two bank robbers on board.

The people of the town would rush on board the moment the boat touched the shore, and Andy decided that no one should come on her deck till the business on hand had been disposed of. He stopped the boat a short distance from the shore, but Dolph saw his father, among the twenty people who had gathered there so soon.

Dolph was directed to bring off the magnate in the tender, and he pulled the boat to the boat house for this purpose.

"So you have become a bank robber, have you, Dolph?" demanded the father, as soon as the son came up to the platform.

"No, sir! I did not rob the bank! Phin did not rob the other, either," replied Dolph, with energy. "But both of the robbers and all the money are on board of this steamer!"

"Is it possible that you are not guilty? Give me your hand, my boy!" and he seized the hand of his son and pressed it, while he was shaking all over with emotion.

"I am not guilty of the robbery, though I am not entirely innocent of all wrong. But Andy is waiting for you, father, to tell you all about it, and he wants the officers."

At that moment the crowd cheered, as the news reached them. One of them volunteered to go for the officers. He returned in a moment with all three of them, for they had come as far as the gate.

"Mr. Barkpool is there also, looking out for the steamer," said the messenger.

"Mr. Barkpool!" exclaimed Mr. Singerlay, as he rushed from the platform to the gate.

The Onongo magnate turned his head when he saw his great enemy. But Mr. Singerlay hastened to him, and took him in front in spite of his efforts to avoid him.

"Mr. Barkpool, I am glad to inform you that your son is board of this steamer, and that he is not guilty of the robbery!" almost shouted Mr. Singerlay.

"Phin on board of the steamer?" added the Onongo magnate. "I thank you for telling me."

"I am going on board of her, and I shall be pleased to have you go with me," continued Mr. Singerlay.

"I thank you, and I will do so," replied Mr. Barkpool. He seemed to be astonished to find himself addressing his bitter enemy, who, however, in this instance, was certainly acting like a friend.

Mr. Singerlay led the way to the boat house. There were five men to be put on board, to say nothing of the cashiers of the two banks, who had just come.

Andy saw the two magnates and the three officers on the platform. He decided to run the bow of the Lily up to it, and he asked Captain Boscook to go to the forward deck, and allow no one but the persons he designated to come on board.

The captain was firm in the discharge of his duty, and he carried out the instructions to the letter, though the whole crowd wanted to go on board. The pilot backed the boat as soon as they were on the deck. He went out to the middle of the river, and then asked the captain to let go the anchor.

The entire party of visitors were escorted to the cabin above by Captain Boscook, who then invited the officers to go with him to the stateroom in which the prisoners were confined. They were handed over to the policemen, who put irons on them in place of the cord, and marched them out into the cabin.

The captain then unlocked his closet, and with the bag in his hand Andy Lamb presented himself before the magnates.

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#### CHAPTER XLV.—THE MEETING IN THE STEAMER'S CABIN.

"WHAT have you got there, Andy?" asked Mr. Singerlay, whose curiosity was excited to the highest pitch by the meager information he had already received.

"This bag contains the money taken from the two banks," replied Andy, without making any flourish in the way of an introduction. "I have not opened it, but I have no doubt in regard to its contents."

"Open it, and let us be certain on this important point," added Mr. Singerlay.

"I have not the key," said Andy, looking at Poddy.

"Where is the key?"

"I suppose Poddy has it."

"Who is Poddy? I have never heard of him before," continued the magnate, moving to the place where Andy stood.

"This is Poddy," he answered, pointing to the chief robber. "I believe his true name is Benjamin Podgate."

"That is my name, without any doubt, and the key of the bag is in my pocket," added Poddy, who seemed to be interested in the proceedings, and was not at all ugly. "I have the honor of introducing myself to you as the person who cleaned out your two banks."

"I need not say that we are very glad to see you, Mr. Podgate," returned Mr. Singerlay, who was willing to admit that the chief was a very gentlemanly robber.

"I should be happy to surrender the key of the bag to you, but my hands refuse to do the bidding of my will."

"Then Mr. Leffwing will kindly assist you in carrying out your good intention."

The officer indicated took from his pocket the key of the bag, and handed it to Mr. Singerlay. Andy placed the bag on a sofa, ready for examination. Mr. Barkpool was talking with Phin, and did not notice what was going on.

"Come, Barkpool, you are interested in this matter, and I want you to see what there is in this bag, as the representative of the Onongo Bank," said the president of the Montoban.

"I shall be glad to see what is in the bag," replied Mr. Barkpool, as he joined the other great man.

The bag was full to repletion, and Andy was glad to see that no mystery in regard to it had to be explained. So far as any one could judge, the money was all there. The two cashiers were set to counting it, and while they were engaged in this duty explanations were in order.

Dolph and Phin took part in the narrative, describing what they had done. They explained without any concealment their own operations in relation to the keys, all of which were found in the bag. But it was fully two hours before the company were in possession of all the facts of the robbery.

Then the officers were sent on shore with the prisoners. By this time the cashiers were ready to report, and they declared that not a dollar of the large sums stolen was missing. Both of the magnates were at the high tide of good nature when they found that they were to be subjected to no loss.

"Phin and Dolph have done exceedingly well in this affair, though nothing can excuse their conduct in going to the banks for the purpose of taking money from the vaults," said Mr. Singerlay.

"I agree with you entirely, Singerlay," added Mr. Barkpool. "I don't wish to shield my boy in the least degree."

"But they have certainly saved the banks from loss," added Mr. Roblock, coming forward with a handful of the burglars' tools he had taken from the bag. "I don't mean to say the boys are not guilty of wrong; but I think they ought to be forgiven."

"Not because we saved the money in the end, but because we have turned over a new leaf," said Dolph. "It has been the biggest lesson I ever learned, and Phin and I have agreed to be friends."

"That's so; and I shall stick to Dolph as long as I live!" replied Phin warmly, as he grasped the hand of his fellow prisoner.

"I think we had better follow the example of the boys," said Mr. Barkpool, as he extended his hand to his fellow magnate.

"With all my heart!" replied Mr. Singerlay. "I have been looking for this opportunity for some time. But Andy Lamb is the real hero of this business, and we ought——"

"To buy this steamer!" interposed Andy.

Both of the bank presidents looked at him in surprise.

Both of them felt that to do this would be yielding to the boys, after both of them had gone astray in regard to this very matter. They shook their heads, and Captain Boscook, who had begun to manifest a lively interest in the proceedings when Andy suggested the buying of the craft, felt as though a half ton weight had been suddenly placed on his back.

"Both of the boys want the boat," said the captain anxiously.

"But after trying to borrow the bank's money to pay for her, as each of them did, they don't deserve to be gratified," added Mr. Singerlay.

"I don't put it on that ground," interposed Andy.

"That is what it looks like, at any rate," continued Dolph's father. "Andy has been the leading spirit in the capture of the robbers and the recovery of the money; and he is certainly entitled to a very liberal reward."

"I agree with you entirely, Singerlay; and a reward of three thousand dollars is not a penny too much," added Mr. Barkpool.

"I don't want any money for anything I have done," said Andy. "If you will buy this boat——"

"Then we will buy her together, and present her to Andy Lamb," suggested Mr. Singerlay.

"I hope you won't do that," said the pilot. "I should not want to own her alone when Dolph and Phin both want her. But I believe the boat will pay well on the lake. Dolph has a plan, and so have I, and there is business in this boat."

"Very well, Andy," laughed Mr. Singerlay. "We will hear you both. Captain Boscook, we will buy your steamer on the spot, and we will give you a check for her when we go ashore."

It was a large party which gathered at dinner at the house of Mr. Singerlay, and the best of feeling prevailed. The two great men, who had been the bitterest of enemies, were even disposed to overdo the matter of "loving one another," for they talked of renewing the partnership, and each wanted to give the other all he had.

As the boat approached the lower end of the lake, Andy took the steamer around the point which projected out into the lake, and entered an inlet. Hardly a person on board had ever been into this arm of the lake.

In a few minutes the Lily came to a small sheet of water, hardly a mile in diameter. It was a beautiful little lake, and there were quite a number

of cottages on its eastern shore. Into this lake a stream flowed from the interior of the country.

"Where in the world are you going to, Andy?" asked Mr. Singerlay, as he came to the window of the pilot house, attended by Mr. Barkpool.

"I am about ready to explain my plan now, gentlemen," he replied.

Just then a locomotive whistle sounded on the shore ahead of the boat, and a train of coal cars passed over a bridge which spanned the inlet of the lake and went along close to the water's edge.

"This is Pink Lake," said the pilot, "and you can see just where the railroad is. The people of Bushrod are making a summer resort of it."

"I have heard of this place before," said Mr. Barkpool.

"The name of that station on the railroad is Pinklawn, as this village of cottages is also called; and I propose to run the steamer to this place, as well as to Bushrod. By building a sort of wharf along the shore in front of us, the cars can dump the coal into the boats or barges."

"Capital!" exclaimed Mr. Singerlay.

"This is where the towing will come in," continued the pilot. "For passengers the steamer will make a trip early in the morning to Bushrod, so that our people can take the express train. Then it will come to Pinklawn with excursionists, and return to Bushrod with passengers in business there. By that time the boat will be ready to take passengers from the train to Montoban. This program is to be repeated late in the afternoon; and between trips the Lily will tow coal and other heavy freights in the barges."

The plan was heartily approved, and Dolph admitted that it was better than the one he had suggested. On the return to Montoban the Lily made a landing at Bunkel Island, and the pilot conducted the party to the grotto, which has since attracted a great many visitors to the island.

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#### CHAPTER XLVI.—THE ONONGO STEAMBOAT COMPANY.

BEFORE the Lily reached Montoban, the "Onongo Steamboat Company" had been formed. It consisted of only three stockholders, Dolph, Andy, and Phin. The capital was five thousand dollars, contributed by the two magnates.

The stockholders were to manage the business of the company in their own way. The extra capital was for the building of the wharves at either end of the route, and for the purchase of barges for freight.

Before two weeks had elapsed the line was in operation. The railroad company did their share, and before the coal of the Montoban Mill was exhausted a supply was brought by the new company.

The boat made her trips as outlined by Andy, and found time also, by doing the towing in the night, to take out excursion parties from Montoban and Bushrod.

Andy was the engineer, and Sparks found a place at once at the Onongo Mill. Dolph was the captain and pilot, and Phin was the purser, who managed all the accounts, sold tickets, and collected freight receipts.

Almost before they knew it, the new company had run into quite a large

and profitable business. The two sons of rich men had no time for mischief, and their reform was immediate and thorough.

This was the beginning of the business. In a few years, more and larger boats were running, and the stockholders were well off when they were twenty one.

The reconciliation of the magnates was complete. Each of them was afraid of breaking the peace, and a second rupture did not occur. They became partners again, and the price of their goods went up in the market. The two banks were united under the name of the Onongo Bank.

One day, just after the formation of the Onongo Steamboat Company, it happened by accident that the blowing up of the dam was mentioned by Mr. Singerlay in conversation with Mr. Lamb.

The engineer acted as though he had an opinion as to the perpetrator of the outrage, and the magnate questioned him. He had seen Dolph come into his father's house with his clothes covered with yellow mud, and that was the color of the soil at the upper dam, while it was all black at the boat house.

Mr. Singerlay talked with Dolph about it, and that young man confessed that he had done it. His purpose was, first, to make coal scarce, and, second, to revenge himself upon Mr. Barkpool for refusing his request.

He was sincerely and heartily sorry for what he had done, and after his conduct in capturing Poddy, his father was ready to forgive him.

But Mr. Singerlay talked with Mr. Barkpool about it, and insisted that Dolph should pay for the rebuilding of the upper dam, which he did out of his private funds.

Poddy got his twenty years in the State prison, and Tom Sawder was sent to the reform school till he was of age, while the other hoodlums were punished with short terms for their assault on Andy and Di Singerlay.

Captain Boscook carries on his farm, and is glad that he got out of the steamboat business, though he is sorry that it did not occur to him to establish a line on Lake Montoban.

Next to the house of Mr. Singerlay is a neat place, which attracts the attention of visitors. If you ask who lives there you will be told that it is occupied by Captain Dolph Singerlay, commander of the steamer Onongo. When he calls his wife after his return from the last trip of the day he addresses her as "Milly."

Near the mansion of Mr. Barkpool, at the upper village, is another handsome residence; and in this one dwells Mr. Phineas Barkpool, the manager of the steamboat company. He is the husband of a lady who is considered one of the fairest in the town. He has a little son whose name is Andrew, and a girl baby called Di.

If you ask who resides in the handsome cottage near the mouth of Rock-rib Creek, any one can tell you that it is the house of Captain Andy Lamb, commander of the steamer Bondego; and that the other Lamb of this fold is still called Di.

THE END.

*Oliver Optic.*